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ABSTRACT

These three reports by national consultants assess first year progress in implementing state mandated educational reforms in Kentucky. First, "The Status of Primary School Reform in Kentucky and Its Implications," by James Rath, Lilian Katz, and John Fanning, reports on site visits to 14 public schools to assess progress in implementing the Kentucky Educational Reform Act (KERA) in primary schools. Findings with respect to the introduction of cooperative learning, developmentally appropriate practice, authentic assessment, parent involvement, and multi-age grouping practices are presented, along with administrators', parents', and teachers' views about KERA mandates. Next, "School-Based Decision Making: Observations on Progress," by Jane L. David, presents results of interviews with Kentucky education officials, school visits, and a review of newspaper articles and other documents. The report indicates that as of June 1992, almost 500 of Kentucky's 1,366 schools had councils for school-based decision making in operation and most had participated in some type of workshop. Finally, "Assessment of Family Resource and Youth Services Centers," by Phillip W. Roeder, presents findings from site visits to six centers, interviews with educators and government officials, and an analysis of program data from state and local agencies. The report indicates that 133 Family Resource and Youth Services Centers were established in 1991-92 to serve 232 schools, and that most of the centers are successfully addressing the emotional, physical, and social needs of students. (AC)

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PRIMARY SCHOOL

SCHOOL-BASED DECISION MAKING

FAMILY RESOURCE/ YOUTH SERVICES CENTERS

First Year Reports to the Prichard Committee

The Prichard Committee
for Academic Excellence

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First Year Reports
to the Prichard Committee

July 1992

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and numerous Kentucky citizens, businesses, Prichard Committee members, and Prichard Alliance members.

PREFACE

The Prichard Committee monitors the progress of school reform in Kentucky and reports that information to the public.

National consultants, knowledgeable about specific education reform programs, will track four aspects of the Kentucky Education Reform Act over five years. These areas include:

- Primary School Programs,
- School-Based Decision Making,
- Family Resource and Youth Services Centers, and
- Teacher Preparation/Continuing Education.

This document includes the first of those reports presented to the Prichard Committee at its July 1992 Annual Meeting. A report on teacher preparation and continuing education will be released in the fall of 1992.

Questions or requests for copies of this report should be directed to the Committee.

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THE STATUS OF THE PRIMARY SCHOOL REFORM IN KENTUCKY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE STATUS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL REFORM IN KENTUCKY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

James Rathe, Lilian Katz, and John Fanning

Introduction:

Three educational consultants with extensive public school and university backgrounds visited fourteen public school settings in Kentucky during the late spring of 1992 to assess aspects of the status of the primary school reform as mandated by the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA). Sites were selected on the basis of geography, demographics, and progress toward implementation of the reforms. Although the schools were not selected statistically to represent all schools in the State of Kentucky, the consultants had a sense that they were able to meet with teachers and administrators who, if not representative knew other teachers and other schools sufficiently well to inform the project of what was happening in Kentucky primary classrooms. A more complete accounting of the procedures used in the study is found in the body of the final report.

Principal Findings:

In all the schools we visited, many steps have already been taken to implement the mandates. Some schools opted to wait to install the multi-age grouping practices until later - - concentrating first on cooperative learning, developmentally appropriate practices, authentic assessment, and the engagement of parents. Others changed grouping patterns first, and let the other attributes of a reformed primary program come later. All of the faculty and principals were optimistic they would be in full compliance, as they understood it, by the deadline.

Many parents have reacted to the KERA mandates by assuming that it is really not their business - - but it is the business of the schools and the school leaders. Parents said or reported of others saying: "They [teachers, principals, supervisors, superintendents] know what is best for my child, and if they tell me that the new primary program is an improvement, then I'm for it." Some parents expressed concerns about the new grading procedures - - especially the absence of letter grades; and others wondered about the high stakes testing that is required for exit from the primary school. Will the new mandates, which encourage authentic assessment, cooperative learning, and developmentally appropriate practices and other wholesome attributes of a primary school program, prepare their children for the end-of-year tests in third grade?

Teachers, on the other hand, were more mixed in their views. Of course, we met a number of enthusiasts, veterans as it were from the open-education movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. They embraced the reforms with open arms. A second group of teachers, who for years have been celebrated as expert and excellent in their craft, held natural concerns about how their teaching might be re-evaluated under the new mandates. Others who felt successful in traditional schools were taking an "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" attitude. There seemed to be some concern that in the new primary program, with the new attributes, and the new guidelines, they may be perceived as "less excellent" as teachers than they are right now under the current system. They are, as a group, moving to accept the new mandates, but with a cynicism bordering on a "this too shall pass" mentality. Finally, there are some teachers who believe deeply that the reforms are a mistake. They express concern that the non-graded idea failed in Kentucky twenty years ago, and they can't see any reason why it won't fail again. They express concern that the teaching profession is once again about to face a backlash

from angry taxpayers and voters if the test scores suffer under the new mandates. Membership in these four groups is not constant, and teachers seem to move from one to the other depending on the vagaries of the school day, the school week, or the usual ups-and-downs of professional life. We were unable to estimate what proportion of Kentucky teachers fall into each group, but there was some indication that active "upper grade teachers," seeing the glacier of reform accelerating and moving toward them as well, are providing some solace and support to those who find themselves now in the hard core of resistance.

Teachers seem to agree that progress toward reform in the primary school was accounted for mostly by the enthusiasm and dedication of classroom teachers, who gave up their own time and often their own money to make the mandates work as well as their authors had hoped - - and in some places even better. It was clear that leadership also played a key role. In some schools, principals were instrumental in convening teacher and parent groups, sending teachers to professional meetings, and scheduling weekend and summer workshops (for no extra pay) so that teachers would have an opportunity to meet, work, and develop some of the key ingredients of the mandates. In short, it was freedom and opportunity that seemed to do the trick.

Many teachers reported being hindered by a lack of time. Efforts on their part to give more time - - in the evening and on weekends and during the summer - - for no salary led to sometimes confrontations with husbands who thought teachers should worry as much about their own children at home as they worry about their children at school. Also, numerous teachers expressed a need for more training. The teachers seemed to have little sense about how to determine if a given activity were developmentally appropriate; about whether or not a given assessment procedure was truly authentic; or how important it was to defer to a minority of complaining parents about the new reporting procedures. Teachers claimed an interest in learning more about these topics and related ideas.

Across the State and in all schools, teachers found the prospect of including the kindergarten children in the primary school concept to be problematic. There are both logistical and theoretical aspects to their concerns. Most kindergartens in Kentucky are half-day. No plan has yet been developed to engage kindergartners who come and go throughout the day into the on-going class group. Second, since kindergartners for the most part are not socialized to school norms, are unable to work alone or contribute effectively to the work of others, they represent a serious impediment to the learning of older pupils in the group.

Recommendations:

The schools we visited have made tremendous progress in the successful implementation of the primary school initiative. As might be expected, the progress toward implementing the KERA mandates represents a broken front. Some schools have made significant and dramatic progress, and for others the progress was barely discernible. As a group, the teachers and principals are supportive of the philosophy and are working very hard to reach the goals suggested by KERA. The views of parents, as a whole, were represented as less enthusiastic but widely accepting of the changes that are taking place in the primary school. To facilitate and accelerate progress in advancing the KERA goals, the following recommendations are advanced.

1. There is an urgent need to improve the public's understanding of the intent and purposes of the KERA mandates for the primary program. A variety of media approaches should be used, showing the teachers working hard to implement the mandates, showing how children and parents are responding to the various attributes of the primary program, and showing how authentic assessment processes can work.

2. Additional technical training aides via video tape need to be produced showing teachers how to conduct authentic assessments, how to distinguish between developmentally appropriate and developmentally inappropriate practices, how to teach thematically, and other similar concepts. Video tapes are the ideal medium since they can be taken home for viewing, seen during lulls in otherwise overly scheduled, and discussed in groups after re-winding portions for closer inspection and review. Incidently, the videos produced to this end might also be used to advance public understandings of the program, as in recommendation one above.

3. There are aspects about the law and its related rules and regulations that are vague. For example, we heard at least six versions of what the State Department of Education will accept as "kindergarten involvement" in the primary school - - from 10 minutes a week to every minute of every day of the week. Each person sharing her view vouched for its accuracy by citing an official of the Kentucky State Department of Education. Another example has to do with the minimum requirements the State Department will impose on schools and on districts. How will compliance with the parent involvement mandate be assessed? How will schools know if they are successfully implementing the mandate for developmentally appropriate practices? It would help to have these policies made public in written form so that everyone has access to them and to their interpretation. The Kentucky State Department of Education has worked hard in this area already, but more needs to be done.

4. In addition, some extant rules and regulations of the Kentucky State Department of Education are seen by teachers to be in conflict with goals of the KERA mandates. For instance, while teachers are working to implement developmentally appropriate practices in the teaching of reading, including the use of trade books and other sources of print material, they tell us there are regulations requiring them to order a specific number of text books for each of their students. (We have subsequently learned that the teachers' perceptions in this instance were inaccurate.) However, we recommend that the Kentucky State Department of Education review all of the promulgated rules and regulations and identify and eliminate or change those which seem to be inconsistent with the intent of the primary school initiative. Further, it would be important to wonder why it is that some teachers' apparently see the rules and regulations as hindering their efforts.

5. To ensure full implementation of KERA, we recommend that the following resources be made available: provide teachers with released time during the summer with pay to meet together to plan their program; supply teachers the resources to attend workshops and other training sessions and to meet with parents to share ideas and exchange views. In addition, give them classroom aides to help with the nitty-gritty of implementing the program - - running dittoes, meeting with children who are falling behind and who need a little extra help, grading papers, and even teaching some small groups. Finally, equip them with materials associated with multi-aged teaching - - from computers to soft-ware packages to thematic instructional kits. Based on our experiences, it makes sense for the leaders in the State of Kentucky to make an assessment of what these, and other supports will cost the taxpayers, and to work to provide them to teachers as quickly as possible.

6. Certainly, everyone in Kentucky interested in advancing the goals of KERA are concerned about the rumors we reported here about the existence of pockets of resistance to the primary school mandates. While we did not experience much resistance on a first hand basis, teachers and administrators who knew other teachers and other schools told us that large numbers of teachers in the system were working to see to it that the mandates fail. All efforts must be made to support teachers and principals who are working to implement the KERA mandates. A schedule of sanctions might work to encourage reluctant principals and teachers to work toward the goals of the mandates and to indicate the State's seriousness in this matter.

7. From what was heard from the teachers, the universities were almost invisible in providing support to schools interested in meeting the KERA deadlines for implementing the primary school mandates. We emphasize that this is a perception of teachers, and not a statement of fact on our part. We recommend that a serious effort be made to engage appropriate faculty members in the universities in this effort. They might be encouraged to do those things they do best: (1) Develop a rationale for the mandates that can be broadcast to the public; (2) Design evaluations that will provide multiple audiences with the data that will enlist public support for the mandates; (3) Write curriculum materials for use in the schools that represent models of authentic assessment, developmentally appropriate practices, and thematic teaching. In addition, the universities could develop a curriculum bank to store and make accessible to teachers "ideas that worked" in various Kentucky schools. Teachers could access the contents of the bank through modems in their schools.

8. Although such a move would clearly provide false hope to those who are saying the mandates are "going to go away," it makes sense to back the current deadline up to its previous place in the time line. Teachers feel aggrieved and mistreated by the new and accelerated time line, especially those who charted out a plan that accommodated the earlier schedule and which was aborted by the abrupt change.

9. All of our recommendations call for the expenditure of resources - - human and material. We suggest that all possible resources within the State - - in the business community, in governmental spheres, and in the universities be encouraged to contribute to the effort to ensure that the mandates are implemented in the Kentucky schools.

THE STATUS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL REFORM IN KENTUCKY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

James Raths, Lilian Katz, and John Fanning

I. Introduction

The Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 (KERA) mandates restructuring kindergarten through grade three by organizing ungraded primary programs to encourage students to learn at their own pace. The language of the Act and related rules and regulations stemming from it specify seven attributes that primary schools should adopt and implement. The deadline date for implementing the primary school mandates was originally fall 1994, but the deadline was recently moved to the fall of 1993. The teachers, administrators, and citizens of Kentucky, interested in meeting their civic and professional responsibilities in the area of primary school education, began a concerted effort to see to it that the mandates were met.

In the fall of 1991, Mr. Robert Sexton, Executive Director of the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence requested our assistance in conducting a study to ascertain the progress that was being made on the KERA primary school initiative. We proposed a procedure to address at least three questions:

1. To what extent have the schools implemented the primary school mandate?

2. How have parents, teachers, and administrators reacted to this new program design?

3. What are the factors that have facilitated or hindered schools in the process of implementing the primary school mandates?

Our proposal was subsequently approved by the Committee, and through the good offices of Mr. Robert Sexton and Ms. Cindy Heine, our procedures were put into motion. This report, comprising our findings, is organized as follows. This brief introduction is followed by a description of our procedures. Next, we report the findings that relate to each of the three questions, listed above. Finally, we share our interpretations of the findings in the form of recommendations for action.

II. Procedures

We had planned to visit eighteen school districts in Kentucky during the early spring of 1992, including those which had fully implemented the primary school mandates, those which had partially implemented the mandates, and those which had not as yet made a significant start in addressing the mandates. Our original design did not take into account the fact that many school districts had not begun the implementation process and they were not keen on receiving visitors who were interested in observing primary school changes. Thus, our design was limited to schools which had been active in addressing the KERA mandates for primary school education. In the main, we visited schools in which faculties and principals had volunteered to demonstrate and model the first steps toward reaching the ideals described in the KERA and in associated and related documents published and distributed by the Kentucky State Department of Education. Two of the schools we visited were model schools whose initial steps were underwritten in part by the Kentucky State Department of Education.

The schools we visited are characterized in Table 1. It is important to say at this point that prior to undertaking our interviews and observations in each site, we assured everyone with whom we spoke that neither their schools nor any individuals within the schools would be identified or knowingly be made identifiable in our accounts of our visits. We have made every effort to keep this promise to our Kentucky colleagues. If we have inadvertently erred and provided knowledgeable Kentucky insiders with clues that would enable them to make a good guess as to which district, school, or individual we are describing, we ask that in the spirit of our commitment, such inferences, right or wrong, be kept confidential.

Table 1
Characteristics of Schools
(N = 14)

School Characteristics	Number of Schools
Region:	
Eastern Kentucky	3
Central Kentucky	8
Western Kentucky	3
Pilot School Status:	
Pilot School	2
Not a Pilot School	12
Size:	
Less than 200 students	6
More than 200 students	8

At each site, we typically met first with the principal for an orientation to the school, rehearsed the day's schedule and discussed our preliminary general questions about the status of the local implementation effort in the primary school program. On some occasions, the interview with the principal was preceded by a meeting with the superintendent or some other central office staff member(s). After the conference with the principal, we toured the primary wing of the school building, dropping into classrooms to briefly greet teachers and the children. After these rounds were accomplished, we were directed in large measure by the day's schedule. In various sequences, we visited classrooms, met with teachers either in groups or in one-to-one meetings, shared coffee and conversation with parents, reviewed documents describing the school's program and the processes that led to the current conceptualization of the primary school, and participated in an exit interview with the principal dealing with any unanswered questions. Needless to say, we were graciously welcomed in every school, and both principals and teachers seemed eager to share their accomplishments, to detail the obstacles they were facing, and to exchange ideas about ways their efforts could be supplemented or enhanced. We felt that each meeting and each conversation represented a frank exchange on the part of caring and concerned citizens of Kentucky.

In the case of three schools, visits were conducted after school was out. We met with faculty representatives from two schools and their principals in a hotel meeting room. On these occasions, teachers brought materials with them to share with us that explicated their programs and their philosophies. A third

school, also visited after classes were over, hosted us in their faculty room. We met with the principal in this school separately in his office later in the morning.

Our interviews were disciplined, in part, by the interview schedule located in Appendix A of this report. Our schedule was designed to be used in "group" interviews. (We had anticipated that we would be meeting with groups of teachers, parents, and citizens.) As our description of a typical visit, above, suggests, we were as likely to meet with individual teachers as with groups of teachers. Our interview schedule was still useful, but we shortened it a bit when we were interviewing individuals and tailored a number of the questions we asked depending on the contexts and our previous experiences on site. While the interview schedule was rarely fully implemented as written, it gives the reader of this report a sense of the questions we asked and the sequence in which they were posed.

After almost all of the school visits were completed, and our written reports concerning each site were shared among the team members, we met in Philadelphia to review our notes, to identify common threads and themes, and to help one another make sense of what we had seen and heard. This conference yielded an outline that disciplined the preparation of our report.

At this point, it may be important to list a number of limitations represented in our procedures. To fully understand our recommendations, readers need to appreciate the constraints under which we worked.

1. Since we are not Kentuckians, we may have lost or misinterpreted some nuances of culture and context that were embedded in our conversations with teachers, administrators, and parents.

2. We did not visit all schools in Kentucky, and we did not survey a representative sample of Kentucky primary teachers. Our inferences are based on the purposive sample described briefly in the discussion below.

3. We did not visit with people who were generally hostile or even indifferent to the primary school mandate as expressed in the KERA. Indeed, we had no direct contact with anyone who openly rejects the reforms. But, some of those with whom we spoke told us of others who are resistant to the KERA initiatives. They reported to us what was being said and thought and planned by those resisting the reforms. Because of the second hand nature of the information about the views of dissenters, we are less confident in our descriptions of them than in our accounts of what we saw and what we heard first hand. This distinction is important.

4. Finally, the schools are engaged in processes of rapid change. Our report is, in effect, a snapshot. Our descriptions are surely not an accurate portrayal of selected Kentucky schools in March 1992 nor are they likely to be accurate of the same Kentucky schools in September 1992. The change process is continuous, unpredictable, comprehensive and complex. We do feel, however, that our cross-sectional view is pertinent, because it may portend the status of schools coming late to the reform process. Our confidence in this regard is strengthened by the degree to which what we heard from teachers, parents, and administrators is remarkably similar to the views reported by Roberts & Kay (1992).

We now turn our attention to our findings as they relate to each of the three guiding questions, ad seriatim.

III. Findings Related to Question 1: How well have the schools implemented the primary school mandates?

Based on observations and conversations with teachers, administrators, and parents, we concluded that the schools we visited overall have made tremendous progress in the successful implementation of the primary school initiative. As might be expected, the progress toward implementing the KERA mandates represents a broken front. Some schools have made significant and dramatic progress, while for others, the progress was barely discernible. In this section of our report, we flesh out our general impressions by addressing the progress made by schools in implementing each of the salient attributes of the primary school program envisioned in the Act.

Multi-age grouping. In our visits, we saw various combinations of multi-age groupings. However, we saw kindergarten students included in the primary school only on an irregular basis. In fact, it is accurate to say that the kindergartners were usually not included in the various organization plans that were implemented in the selected schools we visited. In addition, few schools included a multi-age group of first, second, and third graders in a full day program. The predominant organizational structure that we observed placed children in homogeneous (same age and same ability) groups for reading and arithmetic instruction. For instruction in social studies, science, homeroom, health, physical education, and music, students were usually re-grouped into dual-year groups, viz., first graders with second graders, or second graders with third graders. In about half of the schools we visited, all three grade levels, (first, second, and third grades) spent some time together, but almost always in subjects other than mathematics and reading. Many of the schools were using a quasi-departmentalized structure to organize the primary school program. In this mode, one teacher would prepare the science lessons and teach the same lesson to three or four groups of

mixed-age children who would rotate into her room. Another teacher would prepare a health lesson, a third the social studies lesson, and so forth. This format reduced the amount of teacher planning time required to implement the program.

The groupings for mathematics and reading were rarely flexible and were reportedly based on test scores and teacher recommendations designed to determine which children were ready for the work anticipated in the advanced, middle, and lower groups. For the most part, once children were assigned to groups for skill instruction, there were few changes made. In the other content areas, particularly science, social studies, and health, the assigned groupings were heterogeneous with respect to age and ability and often based on the interests of individual students or on the tasks assigned to sub-groupings within the mixed-age class.

While the grouping patterns in reading and mathematics were fairly traditional, it is important to say that teachers reported making extensive changes in their reading and arithmetic programs. Most often cited was the abandonment of basal texts and the reduced use of workbooks and ditto sheets. In our observations, we noted that in many classes, children of different ages seemed well accustomed to working together on a variety of instructional tasks. However, in more than a few classes, teachers maintained the familiar grade level basal approaches in mathematics and reading instruction.

Almost all teachers seemed to recognize that their programs were not yet in compliance with the KERA mandates, especially with regard to kindergarten children. Further, those teachers in pilot schools were extremely gratified they had a one year "head start" in getting ready for the deadline. They had trouble imagining how their colleagues in sister schools, who have done nothing to get ready for multi-age grouping or the other attributes mandated by the KERA, could possibly meet the deadline.

Developmentally appropriate practices. All of the classes we visited were making attempts to incorporate some features of this attribute. Most evident was the implementation of practices generally described as the "whole language" approach. It was apparent to us that whole language activities had replaced the basal series, workbook, and ditto sheet routine. In most classrooms, children were often invited to write, encouraged to use "invented" spellings, and were challenged to read and write for meaning and understanding. For the most part, reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities were interrelated. There was also evidence of literature extension activities and children being immersed in good literature. Almost all principals, teachers, and parents commented on how much reading

and writing the children in all primary school grades were now doing, and apparently with great interest and enthusiasm.

Cooperative learning was often an item of teacher discussion. Classroom activities were generally structured to enhance cooperation rather than competition or individualization. Some remnants of competition lingered in a few situations and the basic principles of cooperative learning, as advocated by Johnson and Johnson and by Slavin, were occasionally discernible in classrooms. In those instances, tasks were arranged to create positive interdependence, the teaching of cooperative social skills was visible, group reward or recognition was present and small group processing or "debriefing" was encouraged. In most cases, desks were arranged so that children could work in pairs or small groups. The tasks in some classrooms, however, were often designed so that the children worked independently except when they needed assistance. This arrangement precluded extensive peer coaching or tutoring. More often than not, any help that was needed was provided by an adult. Older children, on occasion, were prompted to help younger children, and that help frequently came in the form of completing the task or giving the answer.

In mathematics lessons, teachers made use of manipulatives to teach basic skills or to solve problems posed by text books or suggested by enrichment materials. Often, children worked in pairs or in small groups to solve problems. On many occasions, the problems were "real," dealing with situations in the class - - "how many children are absent?", or "how many children are wearing the color yellow?" Teachers reported using the "Box-it-and Bag-it" approach to introducing mathematics, and seemed pleased with its effects. Mental arithmetic problems were posed to students in the "calendar" sessions held with mixed-aged groups on a daily basis. In this setting, children computed how many days were left before school was out, how many days remained in the month of May, and other similar tasks without aid of paper and pencil. Children who were puzzled were helped by manipulatives readily available to the teacher standing at the chalk board.

In almost all schools, we saw attempts to introduce thematic teaching into primary school programs. Every teacher in every school reported experimenting with a theme approach sometime during the year. Some schools purchased expensive commercial "kits" which provided teachers with suggestions of activities, artifacts, and assessment tasks organized in thematic ways. Other teachers invented their own themes , such as space travel, insect life, or Native Americans. For the most part, teachers were unable or reluctant to give a rationale for selecting one theme over another. Teachers seemed interested in finding themes that would appropriately stimulate children's learning and foster their understandings.

Where we saw thematic teaching, where it had generated children's interest, and where it was pursued by the teacher and the children as an integrating opportunity, where cooperative ventures were encouraged, where learning centers offered real opportunities for exploration, and where the environment was "print and graphics" rich with children's work, then the classrooms were a beehive of activity and enthusiasm. They were alive with questioning, researching, exploring, and dialogue.

For the most part, the activities in which children were engaged in the schools we visited were teacher directed. The involvement of children was largely dependent on teacher questions, teacher prompts, teacher assignments, and teacher acknowledgements. Frequently, at the direction of the teacher, children were involved with classmates in small group work. Very little independent exploration, self-initiated play, or group games were evident. Almost all the children, to a greater or lesser extent, were involved in the writing process through the use of journals. Few children were expected to complete workbook pages and dittos (drill work) was used sparingly. In the area of mathematics, many children were using manipulatives to "work out" problems assigned to them by the teacher. Children were involved in seeing, hearing, reading, writing and less frequently with activities that required tasting, touching, or smelling. There were few opportunities for children to become aware of and develop an interest in topics or ideas through exploration or inquiry. Touching, experimenting, choosing, talking, and negotiating were primarily teacher-led and teacher-controlled functions.

A significant way for children to develop their imaginations and creative dispositions is through play. Child "play" and child initiated activity were occasionally observed in the classrooms we visited. Structured games, imaginary role play situations, and independent exploration, when observed, were usually at designated centers.

<u>Continuous progress, authentic assessment, and qualitative reporting</u>. Teachers and administrators indicated wholehearted acceptance of the notion of continuous progress. The teachers view their programs as being success oriented and non-competitive and they believe in the philosophy of "students progressing at their own rate." There is a concern, however, that the criteria for advancement to the fourth grade may eventually drive the primary program. Since the advancement criteria have not yet been developed by the State Department of Education, the teachers are naturally wary. It is in the areas of authentic assessment and qualitative reporting that the teachers have made, as they see it, significant changes. All of the teachers indicated that they are using student portfolios and journals to provide examples of student work, and they share the work samples with parents to meet, in part, the requirements of qualitative

reporting, authentic assessment, and continuous progress. Many teachers reported that they formally observed children at work and play, held individual conferences with children, and made notations for the record as part of their assessment and reporting procedures.

There is little question that the academic domain is the focus of much of the assessment and reporting activity. The social, emotional, physical, and aesthetic areas, by comparison, are neglected. Video tapes, audio tapes, and computer disks were never mentioned or displayed as a means of capturing actual learning experiences. In several classes, there were photo albums which portrayed the development of projects or unit work. All of the schools had abandoned letter or numerical grades on report cards, and all schools had scheduled parent conferences. Many schools, in fact, indicated that they had increased the number of conference opportunities in the past year in spite of the difficulty in inducing some parents to attend. All schools had some sort of check list as the major element of the report card. The check lists were as a rule "skills based" or they reported on major content/activity areas. They are sent home every four or six weeks and generally use a three scale indicator for each item on the list, such as always, sometimes, never; or beginning, developing, independent. In addition, some report cards provided space for teacher narratives and parent written responses.

The parents seemed more anxious about the changes in the report card than in any other feature of KERA. There was a notion that report cards are motivating, and if they become "soft," children in Kentucky won't work as hard as they should in school work.

Parent involvement. All schools we visited reported much greater parent involvement and participation this year than in years prior to KERA. However, there was clearly a range. Several schools enrolling students from the upper end of the middle class boasted of contributions of several thousands of parent volunteer hours. The hours are donated to help run libraries, curriculum laboratories, computer laboratories, and the like. Schools in poorer communities had less to report in quantitative terms, but assured us that the parents who did work in the school did so with enthusiasm and effectiveness. Nowhere did we see nor did we hear expressed the idea that somehow parents were to be partners in the educational process. Where parents were interested in lifting a hand, sharing a load, or donating services, that was all right. But the mechanisms for making the partnership other than that was not in the offing. Parents confided with us that they were convinced that for the most part, teachers did not want them in their rooms when classes were in session. This may be a valid perception, explained by the experimental nature of the new program. Further, it is quite

understandable. The primary teachers in Kentucky are in the middle of a difficult and radical reform process. Teachers seemed reluctant to invite parents to participate as partners in their new programs, since there were so many questions in their own minds regarding how things should be going. The expectation that these teachers should build good relations with parents as they are struggling with their own adaptations to the mandated changes may be unreasonable.

Other attributes. In all schools on our itinerary, we saw teachers working together in teams - - often at great cost. They gave up planning periods to meet together, or stayed late, not infrequently through the dinner hour, to complete their group tasks. Efforts on their part to give more time - - in the evening and on weekends and during the summer - - for no salary led to sometimes bitter confrontations with husbands who thought teachers should worry as much about their own children at home as they worry about their children at school. Parents told us that they appreciated the hard work teachers were doing, and they seemed to like the fact that their children would have two teachers or more during the day. Parents perceived schools as "being closer knit" since the team planning concept was introduced.

The use of computers was evident in all but a few schools. Whether they were organized in computer laboratories or simply installed in a classroom, children had access to computers and to new soft-ware that transcended simple "drill and grill" exercises.

Summary. In sum, all the schools we visited have taken steps to accommodate the mandates of KERA. However, it is our judgment that while great strides have been made in the primary school programs we visited, a great deal remains to be done. Further, what needs to be done are not simply some routine tasks that take only time or money to complete. A number of the mandates pose serious conceptual and philosophical problems for teachers, principals, and parents that need to be worked out over time. The schools we visited all had some sort of head start in meeting the mandates. Almost in every case, the situation at the outset was particularly promising for change: a sympathetic principal, additional resources, a group of enthusiastic teachers, and/or a trusting community. How hard will it be to shift from more traditional approaches to the mandated program in sites lacking one or more of these advantages?

IV. Findings Related to Question 2: How have parents, teachers, and administrators reacted to this new program design?

Teachers and administrators. The teachers and administrators with whom we met and talked about the primary school initiative were volunteers. That is to say, they had agreed to implement the primary school program in advance of the required deadline date and they seemed committed to having their efforts succeed. Both administrators and teachers seemed to feel that the changes in the curriculum and teaching methods required by the mandate were more important than the mixed-age attribute. The educational professionals were especially unclear about this aspect of the mandate: "How much of the total school day are children supposed to be mixed?" They also asked, "Are the children to be mixed only for so-called theme work, or for instruction in the basic skills or both?" And also, "Are kindergartners supposed to be included in the multi-age groups for substantial periods of time?"

It is important to stress that no single generalization will suffice to portray the attitudes of Kentucky primary teachers. Of course, teachers hold diverse views. We ran into a number of enthusiasts, veterans as it were from the open-education movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. They embraced the reforms with open arms. A second group of teachers, who for years have been celebrated as expert and excellent in their craft, were taking an "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" attitude. There seemed to be some concern that in the new format, with the new attributes, and the new guidelines, they may be perceived as "less excellent" as teachers than they are right now under the current system. They are, as a group, moving to accept the new mandates, but with a cynicism bordering on a "this too shall pass" mentality. Finally, there are some teachers who believe deeply that the reforms are a mistake. They express concern that the non-graded idea failed in Kentucky twenty years ago, and they can't see any reason why it won't fail again. Further, they hold the view that the teaching profession is once again about to face a backlash from angry tax payers and voters if the test scores suffer under the new mandates. Membership in these three groups is not constant, and teachers seem to move from one to the other depending on the vagaries of the school day, the school week, or the usual ups-and-downs of a professional life. We were unable to estimate what proportion of Kentucky teachers fall into each group, but there was some indication that active "upper grade teachers," seeing the glacier of reform accelerating and moving toward them as well, are providing some solace and support to those who find themselves now in the hard core of resistance.

Parents. It is important to note that the parents with whom we met were hand-picked, comprised only a small group of parents, and in many instances were paid aides as well as parents of children in the schools we visited. The majority of the parents

we met had children in the primary program, although we did sit in with parents of children beyond the primary grades. In general, parents indicated pleasure in seeing their children's enthusiasm for their school work, and a number of other "side effects" of the changes now occurring. Parents told us how their children excitedly reported on many of their school projects and activities, and believed steadfastly that "school was fun" - - to the point of coming to school ill on occasion. This series of anecdotal accounts was quite an endorsement of the new primary program. Several parents expressed relief that there will be no more "grade retention" in the school.

The parents with whom we spoke characterized the views of most of their neighbors in the community as being indifferent to the changes that have occurred and that are proposed by the KERA. Parents, we were told, generally believe the schools will do a good job, but even if things aren't going well, most parents believe they can't do much about it. On the other side, we met with parents characterized by local school people as "militant," who were convinced that the schools were not functioning well, and who were also persuaded that only through parent and citizen organizations exerting pressure at public meetings will improvement come about.

While almost all of the parents with whom we spoke were positive in their views of KERA and what was happening in their children's schools, they indicated that a few parents in the community were skeptical at best, and hostile at worst. The bases for some of these critical views varied. Evidently, some parents complain that their children were "being experimented on." Others worried that combining grade levels inevitably means that the older children's progress will be slowed down by the presence of the younger ones. Others raised questions about children who move ahead of the equivalent of third grade skills having to hold back until they get to fourth grade. Finally, some parents, including those we interviewed, seemed anxious about grades and assessment, wondering how they are going to know whether their children's progress is on target. These concerned parents were confused or suspicious when they are presented with examples of their own child's work (in portfolios) with no basis for comparisons with other children. Some also indicated a concern about how their children will do in fourth grade and beyond if middle schools don't adopt the same "critical attributes" now required of primary schools.

V. Findings Related to Question 3: What are the factors that have facilitated or hindered schools in the process of implementing the primary school mandates?

We report under this heading two sets of answers. First, we share the ideas we heard from teachers and from administrators. Second, we describe some additional factors that seemed relevant

on the basis of our observations and our discussions. The two sets are not meant to be contradictory, but supplementary. In any event, we thought it important to report the two categories of ideas separately, each with a different heading.

Teachers' and administrators' views. Teachers, as a rule, took full responsibility for the progress that was manifest in their schools. Interestingly enough, while acknowledging administrator leadership and even State resources as helpful, they claimed that it was through their mutual interest, support, and hard work that progress was achieved.

The teachers and administrators almost unanimously reported they did not have sufficient time to do the work required to implement the KERA mandates. Teachers, east, central and west, reported that they were spending an inordinate amount of time in preparation and planning with still more to be done. Some teachers believe that once the program is fully launched, and one or two cycles of students have been educated in the new curriculum, the pressures of time may be somewhat reduced.

The teachers told us as well that they need some technical help in putting the mandates into place. They are anxious to learn more about whole language, writing as a process, cooperative learning, theme development, authentic assessment, and developmentally appropriate practices. This call for help was augmented again and again by their saying, "we do not need help from university professors. We need help from classroom teachers who have been successful working in multi-age sites with thematic curricula."

Progress in all areas is being held up, according to the teachers, by a lack of instructional materials. Almost all teachers called for the purchase of more trade books to make the whole language approach really work. They claimed that the present financial allowance per child is not sufficient to provide the necessary variety and quantity of books for all children in the program. Teachers also expressed a need for more "hands-on" materials for use in mathematics and science, and for computers with effective software programs.

Teachers seem to hold strongly to the belief that the wider the age and ability range within a given classroom, the more critical the requirement for additional "adult hands" to respond to the educational and social needs of children. This complaint echoes the "time demands" cited in our first paragraph above. To implement a program for many different ability levels within the class, there is a great deal of library work, duplication of materials, preparation of visuals, grading of papers, and much more. Teachers were confident that well-trained aides could provide them with the boost to put the KERA mandates over the top.

The inclusion of kindergarten children in the non-graded program was seen as a tremendous problem by all the teachers and by most administrators. One of the sticking points was that most schools have half-day kindergartens, and it is difficult to find ways of integrating two separate and independent kindergarten groups into the primary program each day. While most teachers feel that they could arrange for some kindergarten children involvement periodically and minimally during each week, they are convinced that the permanent assignment of kindergarten pupils to the primary school program on a daily basis would be detrimental to the children, logistically difficult if not impossible, and an unfair staffing arrangement.

Some teachers feel strongly that the Department of Education will determine the direction of the primary program when the 4th grade entrance standards are determined. They believe most assessment will be driven by those standards and the Department should provide acceptable examples and direction for documentation.

A number of teachers who were deeply engaged in the process of implementing the mandates of the KERA as they pertained to the primary program felt betrayed when principals or school boards or other agents and agencies in the community required their children to take standardized achievement tests this spring. The tests, according to the teachers' views, did not measure their curriculum, and could be used by opponents of the new mandates to torpedo the program.

Finally, teachers and administrators were adamant that the new deadline for reaching full implementation of the primary mandates of KERA was an additional obstacle. They feel that the reforms are being imposed in too rapid a time frame. They see the reforms as being other than superficial. They are comprehensive and demanding expectations. The reforms are also advanced with a zeal that suggests to some experienced and highly respected teachers that their own beliefs and their own practices - - revered in the community and within the profession for some time - - are now discredited. This perception means that it is difficult to move quickly and to move too quickly can produce political backlash at the community level that should not be underestimated. The teachers told us that to require all teachers in all schools to implement the program on such short notice, without ample training or direction is, in the minds of many teachers, an invitation to failure. According to those with whom we spoke, there are many frightened, angry, and pessimistic teachers watching from the sidelines.

<u>Our views</u>. We find all of the views expressed to us by the teachers and administrators to be credible and worthy of respect. In the paragraphs just above, we tried to capture the voices of the principals and teachers with whom we spoke. In this section,

we would like to use our own voices to reiterate some of the observations cited above, and to add some of our own.

Where we saw major success in implementing the primary school mandates, we also saw teachers who volunteered to take on the task; we saw principals and other leaders who supported the teachers' work, sometimes by merely staying out of their way, but more often by providing them with resources to attend meetings and workshops, to visit other schools, to subscribe to journals and to purchase books discussing the important issues related to the reform. In addition, we found teachers so committed to the changes mandated by the KERA they were willing to give time freely to the effort - - time that represented quality family time - - summer vacations, other vacations, early mornings, and dinner hours. In working together, the teachers encouraged each other when frustrations were met or difficulties emerged. They recognized a within-group consensus of what was best for pupils in the primary school, and they were enthusiastic about working together to reach their goals.

The concepts included in the KERA represent ideals that have had a central place in the philosophy of early childhood education for many years. Developmentally appropriate practices, thematic teaching, authentic assessment are just a few examples of the concepts that constitute much of the language of the KERA mandates. But, not only at the grassroots level of the classroom, but within the profession itself, various definitions exist. Specialists in the field have not yet developed clear examples and counter-examples to help teachers know if in fact they are meeting KERA expectations.

The slogan-like character of the terms used to describe some of the attributes of the primary school mandate is seen in the staking out of the high ground in the choice of words. Can anyone be for "unauthentic assessment?" Can anyone espouse "developmentally inappropriate practices?" So, discussions on the merits of these ideas, potentially useful for clarifying their meanings, are shortcut by the shrill tone of their descriptors. As a result, teachers are hindered in working together to define the attributes in practical ways.

Another area of confusion is in the regulations concerning KERA implementation promulgated by the Kentucky State Department of Education. While the KERA is specific in some instances, it is, for the most part, very general and in need of explication. The State Department of Education has, in many instances, done an admirable job of disseminating information to the local school districts and outlining various alternative scenarios. In fact, there has been some criticism that the Department has been too specific in its expectations. A different, and perhaps prevailing view, suggests that in an attempt to allow school districts to ease into the primary initiative and by providing

several options for gradual implementation, the Department is seen by teachers as creating confusion with regard to the criteria of compliance that will be applied. As cited above, most teachers are anxious to know the minimum expectation(s) with regard to the inclusion of kindergarten students, the required age-span in multi-age groupings, and the requirements of authentic assessment, just to name a few. There are some individuals who believe that as long as the Department allows flexibility, many schools will move as slowly as possible in spite of the requirement for an annual plan. In addition, there appears to be some regulations, in particular with regard to the purchase of textbooks and class size that many educators believe are counter-productive to the primary initiative. For instance, while teachers are working to develop developmentally appropriate practices in the teaching of reading, including the use of trade books and other sources of print material, they tell us there are regulations requiring them to order a specific number of text books for each of their students. These areas of apparent inconsistency need to be reviewed.

One significant area of policy confusion deserves a special paragraph. In many of the schools we visited, it was apparent that the staff had endorsed the concept of continuous progress and were providing instruction for classified, Chapter 1, and gifted and talented children within the regular classroom. According to the regular and special teachers, the special needs children are functioning well and all of the children benefit by having additional professionals in the room assisting the teacher. However, there were some schools which continue the practice of "pull out" to meet the needs of these children. It is our view that the Department of Education needs to be clear with regard to continuous progress and the intent of the law with regard to exceptional children.

Involving parents as partners is a goal in the education of their children, that in our view, represents an important challenge to Kentucky educators. In those schools where parents have been invited to participate in the development of the initial plans and where they are kept apprised of progress toward the goals, and where they are encouraged to work with professionals as developments occur, there seems to be a genuine enthusiasm for and commitment to the program. Unfortunately, however, in some locations there seems to be a long standing practice of limited or zero involvement of parents and other interested citizens in the education of children. To invite parents to a meeting, in our judgment, is an insufficient gesture toward the development of true parent partnerships. Much work will need to be done to encourage, support, and confirm a solid parent-school partnership.

VI. Recommendations

As a group, the teachers and principals in Kentucky primary schools are supportive of the philosophy and are working very hard to reach the goals outlined by KERA. The views of parents, as a whole, were represented as less enthusiastic but nevertheless grudgingly accepting of the changes that are taking place in the primary school. To facilitate and accelerate progress in advancing the KERA goals, the following recommendations are advanced.

1. There is an urgent need to improve the public's understanding of the intent and purposes of the KERA mandates for the primary program. A variety of media approaches should be used, showing primary teachers working hard to implement the mandates, showing how children and parents are responding to the various attributes of the primary program, and showing how authentic assessment processes can work.

2. Additional technical training aides via video tape need to be produced and disseminated showing teachers how to conduct authentic assessments, how to distinguish between developmentally appropriate and developmentally inappropriate practices, how to teach thematically, and other similar concepts. Video tapes are the ideal medium since they can be taken home for viewing, seen during lulls in otherwise overly scheduled days, and discussed in groups after re-winding portions for closer inspection and review. Incidently, the videos produced to this end might also be used to advance public understandings of the program, as in recommendation one above.

3. There are aspects about the law and its related rules and regulations that are vague. For example, we heard at least six versions of what the State Department of Education will accept as "kindergarten involvement" in the primary school - - from 10 minutes a week to every minute of every day of the week. Each person sharing her view vouched for its accuracy by citing an official of the Kentucky State Department of Education. Another example has to do with the minimum requirements the State Department will impose on schools and on districts. How will compliance with the parent involvement mandate be assessed? How will schools know if they are successfully implementing the mandate for developmentally appropriate practices? It would help to have these policies made public in written form so that everyone has access to them and to their interpretation. The Kentucky State Department of Education has worked hard in this area already, but more needs to be done.

4. In addition, some extant rules and regulations of the Kentucky State Department of Education are seen by teachers to be in conflict with goals of the KERA mandates. For instance, while teachers are working to implement developmentally appropriate

practices in the teaching of reading, including the use of trade books and other sources of print material, they tell us there are regulations requiring them to order a specific number of text books for each of their students. (We have subsequently learned that the teachers' perceptions in this instance were inaccurate.) However, we recommend that the Kentucky State Department of Education review all of the promulgated rules and regulations and identify and eliminate or change those which seem to be inconsistent with the intent of the primary school initiative. Further, it would be important to wonder why it is that some teachers' apparently see the rules and regulations as hindering their efforts.

5. To ensure full implementation of KERA, we recommend that the following resources be made available: provide teachers with released time during the summer with pay to meet together to plan their program; supply teachers the resources to attend workshops and other training sessions and to meet with parents to share ideas and exchange views. In addition, give them classroom aides to help with the nitty-gritty of implementing the program - - running dittoes, meeting with children who are falling behind and who need a little extra help, grading papers, and even teaching some small groups. Finally, equip them with materials associated with multi-aged teaching - - from computers to soft-ware packages to thematic instructional kits. Based on our experiences, it makes sense for the leaders in the State of Kentucky to make an assessment of what these, and other supports will cost the taxpayers, and to work to provide them to teachers as quickly as possible.

6. Certainly, everyone in Kentucky interested in advancing the goals of KERA are concerned about the rumors we reported here about the existence of pockets of resistance to the primary school mandates. While we did not experience much resistance on a first hand basis, teachers and administrators who knew other teachers and other schools told us that large numbers of teachers in the system were working to see to it that the mandates fail. All efforts must be made to support teachers and principals who are working to implement the KERA mandates. A schedule of sanctions might work to encourage reluctant principals and teachers to work toward the goals of the mandates and to indicate the State's seriousness in this matter.

7. From what was heard from the teachers, the universities were almost invisible in providing support to schools interested in meeting the KERA deadlines for implementing the primary school mandates. We must emphasize that this is a perception of teachers, and not a statement of fact on our part. Perhaps by knowing what teachers are thinking in this regard will be useful in formulate appropriate plans. We recommend that a serious effort be made to engage appropriate faculty members in the universities in this effort. They might be encouraged to do

those things they do best: (1) Develop a rationale for the mandates that can be broadcast to the public; (2) Design evaluations that will provide multiple audiences with the data that will enlist public support for the mandates; (3) Write curriculum materials for use in the schools that represent models of authentic assessment, developmentally appropriate practices, and thematic teaching. In addition, the universities could develop a curriculum bank to store and make accessible to teachers "ideas that worked" in various Kentucky schools. Teachers could access the contents of the bank through modems in their schools.

8. Although such a move would clearly provide false hope to those who are saying the mandates are "going to go away," it makes sense to back the current deadline up to its previous place in the time line. Teachers feel aggrieved and mistreated by the new and accelerated time line, especially those who charted out a plan that accommodated the earlier schedule and which was aborted by the abrupt change.

9. All of our recommendations call for the expenditure of resources - - human and material. We suggest that all possible resources within the State - - in the business community, in governmental spheres, and in the universities be encouraged to contribute to the effort to ensure that the primary school mandates are implemented in the Kentucky schools.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

March 7, 1992

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Warm-up

(Note: We will be conducting group interviews. Care must be taken to see to it that all participants have a chance to contribute and the atmosphere is one of respect for diverse opinions within the group.)

As you know, I (we) are here on behalf of the Prichard Committee to learn as much as we can about how things are going with the Kentucky Educational Reform Act of 1990 (KERA). There is widespread interest in the exciting things happening in Kentucky. We hope to find out how it is going, and what you think needs to be done as you move forward toward 1993.

Our particular focus is on the implementation of the KERA mandate for the Primary School. I have a list of general questions for you. I think we can do this in about half-an-hour. Please don't feel obliged to answer any question, if you would prefer not to do so for any reason.

We are assuming that your participation in this meeting is voluntary. Any person who decides now or at any time during our meeting that he/she would like to leave, please feel free to simply get up and leave the room. No offense will be taken.

Thank you for helping us find out more about the KERA!

Questions[1]

(Modify the wording for teachers, parents, or school officials as needed.)

1. (A warm-up to get at the basic attitudes toward the Primary School mandate.) It would be helpful as a start if you would each talk a bit about your own perceptions of the Primary School feature mandated by the KERA. In general, is it a proposal that you can support?

2. Some of the changes called for in the KERA are major, others are relatively minor, and some in-between. (The interviewer may need to summarize the main points of KERA.) Where would you put the Primary School mandate on this scale?

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[1] It would be helpful if we had a laminated card indicating on one side what are the major proposals in the KERA and on the other an outline of the Primary School mandate. This card could be shared in the group to remind participants of the principal elements of the Act and the central components of the Primary School mandate.

3. As you see it, how does the KERA Primary School mandate change things here in the District?

4. Which aspects of the Primary School mandates are most desirable from your perspective?

5. Which aspects of the PS mandates are least desirable from your perspective?

6. Are there some aspects of the mandates for which you have no particular strong opinion?

7. It is reasonable to think that any proposed change in our schools has some risks. What do you see as some risks in the planned Primary School? (Probe here to uncover not only the risks that are identified, but the reasoning linking the Primary School mandate to the risks.)

8. Who (or what) is most instrumental in encouraging the school to adopt the PS mandate?

9. Throughout the State of Kentucky, communities have their own special characteristics and traditions. As you think about this community in particular, how well do you think the proposal for establishing Primary Schools is in step with its special characteristics and traditions?

10. How close do you think your school is to meeting the expectations of the Primary School mandate?

11. Sometimes the day to day progress toward a goal is helped by having a formal plan to guide it. Is there such a plan in this [your child's] school? Follow up, as appropriate with:

a. How was this plan developed?

b. Does the plan seem reasonable, feasible, practical to you?

c. Would you say that the change-over toward the Primary School is implemented half of the way? quarter? nearly complete? Well in place? Not started?

Note: Questions 12-14 represent options based on the group's responses to question 11 (c).

12. [Ask this question only if the response to 11 (c) suggests that the progress is lagging.] Where is the progress more or less stuck?

13. [Ask this question only if the response to 11 (c) suggests that the mandate is not yet fully implemented.] The deadline for implementing the Primary School mandate is fairly close. What sort of help do you [the school] need to meet the deadline? Follow-up as appropriate with:

a. What resources are needed?

b. What strategies are needed?

c. Who should provide the help?

14. [Ask this question only if the response to 11 (c) suggests that progress is on track.] What helped you [the school] to make the progress so far achieved?

15. What effect will the PS mandate have (or will it likely have) on the program? on the budget? on the children (students)?

16. On the basis of what has been accomplished so far, and from what you have seen [in other schools, if not here], what do you think about the appropriateness of the Primary School mandate?

17. Are there any other points you would like to share about the Primary School mandate?

Closure

Summarize the two or three main ideas you heard from the group, giving members a chance to modify your summary or to add to it. The summary should be holistic. Promise that the details heard and noted in the interview will be included in our report.

Thank the participants for their time and interest and for their good thinking.

APPENDIX B

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES OF KENTUCKY'S
PRIMARY SCHOOL PROGRAM

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES OF KENTUCKY'S PRIMARY SCHOOL PROGRAM

Kentucky's Primary School Program Position Statement identifies seven critical attributes as indicated in bold type below. The "bullets" under each are examples of the critical attribute, and represent strategies a school may choose, as well as others they may develop, as they write an Action Plan for Implementing the Primary Program.

Developmentally Appropriate Educational Practices

- Integrated curriculum
- Active child involvement, interaction, and exploration
- Use of manipulatives/multi-sensory activities
- Balance of teacher-directed and child-initiated activities
- Varied instructional strategies and approaches such as whole language, cooperative learning, peer coaching/tutoring, thematic instruction, projects, learning centers, and independent learning activities, etc.
- Flexible groupings and regroupings for instruction based on interest, learning style, problem solving, skill instruction (short term), reinforcement, random, etc.

Multi-Age/Multi-Ability Classrooms

- Heterogeneous grouping
- Flexible age ranges
- Family groupings

Continuous Progress

- Students progress at own rate as determined by authentic assessment
- Promotes social, emotional, physical, aesthetic, cognitive development
- Success oriented
- Non-competitive
- Documentation of pupil progress through anecdotal records, observations, portfolios, journals, videotapes, computer disks, etc.
- Non-retention/Non-promotion

Authentic Assessment

- Occurs continually in context of classroom involvement
- Reflects actual learning experiences
- Emphasizes conferencing, observing, examining multiple, varied work samples, etc.
- Documents social, emotional, physical, aesthetic, and cognitive development

Qualitative Reporting Methods

- Descriptive, narrative, ongoing
- Reflect a continuum of pupil progress
- Varied formats such as portfolios, journals, videotapes, narratives, etc.

Professional Teamwork

- Securing regular time for planning/sharing
- Varied instructional delivery systems such as team teaching, collaborative teaching, peer coaching, etc.
- Regular communication among all professional staff (PE, Music, Art, Special Education, Gifted, Chapter 1, etc.)

Positive Parent Involvement

- Home/school partnerships
- School/Community partnerships
- Continuous information exchange

JAMES RATHS

JAMES RATHS is the new department chair for the Department of Educational Studies and will be teaching EDS 627, Models of Teaching this fall. He received a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Yale College, a MAT from Yale University in teaching, and a doctoral degree in evaluation, research and statistics from New York University.

Dr. Raths comes to the University of Delaware with extensive experience, including teaching and conducting research at the following universities: the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee, the University of Maryland, the University of Illinois, and the University of Vermont. His previous research interests have focused primarily on the evaluation of instruction and curriculum. Lately, however, he has turned his attention to studying the decision-making process used by national accreditation agencies for higher education.

In his leisure time, Dr. Raths enjoys golf and reading. At present, he has just "discovered" the work of Canadian novelist, Robinson Davies, and has just finished *The Rebel Angels*, a novel about university professors, which he highly recommends.

Lilian G. Katz, Ph. D.

Lilian Katz is Professor of Early Childhood Education at the University of Illinois (Urbana-Champaign) where she is also Director of the ERIC Clearinghouse on Elementary & Early Childhood Education. She has just completed a six-year term as Editor-in- Chief of the Early Childhood Research Quarterly and is President-Elect of the National Association for the Education of Young Children (will be President on October 1, 1992).

Professor Katz is author of numerous articles, chapters and books. Her most recent book is Engaging Children's Minds: The Project Approach (with Sylvia Chard). Dr. Katz has lectured widely around the world and held Visiting appointments at colleges and universities in Canada, Australia, Germany, the West Indies, England, India, Israel and many parts of the U. S. A.

> Professor Katz immigrated to California from her native England just in time to graduate from Woodrow Wilson High School in East Los Angeles. She attended Whittier College - where she will be awarded an honorary doctorate next May - then moved to San Francisco where she married Boris Katz (who had immigrated there from China) Professor Katz had five years as a parent in cooperative nursery schools in S. F. with her 3 children, then completed her B. A. (cum laude) at San Francisco State College, taught at Redwood Parents' Nursery School in Redwood City, Calif. for a few years and then completed her Ph. D. at Stanford University in Child Development in 1968.

The Katz family moved to Illinois in 1968. They have 2 grandchildren.

John F. Fanning

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He is the former Virginia State Organizational Chairman of the International Reading Association, the past president of the Virginia State Reading Association, the Greater Washington Reading Council and the Delaware Valley Reading Association. He is also the past president of the Somerset County New Jersey Association of School Administrators and has served on the executive committee of the New Jersey Association of School Administrators as a representative from both Somerset and Morris counties.

Dr. Fanning is a former member and chairperson of the State of New Jersey Commissioner's Advisory Council for the Handicapped. He received his Bachelor's Degree from Towson State University, his Master's Degree from the University of Delaware and his Doctorate from the University of Maryland.

SCHOOL-BASED DECISION MAKING: OBSERVATIONS ON PROGRESS

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July 1992

SCHOOL-BASED DECISION MAKING: OBSERVATIONS ON PROGRESS
A First-Year Report to The Prichard Committee

Jane L. David, Ed.D.
Bay Area Research Group
July 1992

Executive Summary

The Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) is designed to create a performance-based education system to increase the learning of all students. The premise of this groundbreaking legislation is that those closest to the students (teachers, parents, and school administrators) have the authority to make school-level policy decisions, in exchange for assuming responsibility for student performance, guided by state goals for student performance. School-based decision making (SBDM) is KERA's vehicle for delegating authority to each school site. Under SBDM, schools form councils of three teachers, two parents, and the school administrator which control many decisions about their instructional program, learning environment, and staffing.

The results from the first of a five-year study of SBDM are based on interviews with Kentucky education officials, visits to seven SBDM schools, central office staff, and to schools not yet participating, and a review of hundreds of Kentucky newspaper articles and other documents. As of June 1992, almost 500 of Kentucky's 1366 schools had councils up and running. Most have participated in some type of introductory workshops. In general their agendas have focused on creating operating policies and on issues of discipline, extracurricular activities, and facilities.

Representing a significant shift in authority to schools, SBDM has been a major force in communicating the importance and seriousness of KERA across the state and a critical link between schools and their communities. Teachers especially welcome the opportunity to select their principal and parents welcome the opportunity to have an official voice in school policy making. Not surprisingly, the first year has raised questions, concerns, and conflicts--the very signs of progress in an undertaking as complex and dramatic as KERA.

Implementing all of KERA is a massive undertaking. SBDM, the critical underpinning of KERA, is off to a strong start. But there are major hurdles ahead. Four challenges in particular bear watching and learning from over the next few years: shifting from adversarial relationships to partnerships, focusing school decision making on teaching and learning, ensuring ongoing opportunities for on-the-job professional development, and finding the right balance between state and district requirements on the one hand and school council discretion on the other. As the new roles and relationships become more familiar and the direction of needed changes more clear, SBDM has the potential to play a vital role in transforming Kentucky's schools.

SCHOOL-BASED DECISION MAKING: OBSERVATIONS ON PROGRESS

1. Overview

The Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) is the most comprehensive education reform legislation in the nation. KERA aims to create a performance-based education system, accompanied by a substantial increase in funding and a more equitable allocation across districts. The premise of this performance-based system is that those closest to the students (teachers, parents, and school administrators) have the authority to make school-level policy decisions, in exchange for assuming responsibility for student performance. School-based decision making (SBDM) is KERA's vehicle for delegating authority to each school site. Under SBDM, schools form councils which control many decisions about their instructional program, learning environment, and staffing.

Representing a significant shift in authority to schools, SBDM has been a major force in communicating the importance and seriousness of KERA across the state and a critical link between schools and their communities. Teachers especially welcome the opportunity to select their principal and parents welcome the opportunity to have an official voice in school policy making. Not surprisingly, the first year has raised questions, concerns, and conflicts--the very signs of progress in an undertaking as complex and dramatic as KERA. As the new roles and relationships become more familiar and the direction of needed changes more clear, SBDM has the potential to play a vital role in transforming Kentucky's schools.

2. Research Framework

The SBDM component of KERA requires all schools by 1996 to form councils, composed of three teachers and two parents, elected by their constituencies, and the principal or administrator. Councils are to develop policies in areas of curriculum, technology use, assignment of staff time, assignment of students to classes and programs, use of school space, and discipline, among others. They have direct control over funds for instructional materials and school-based student support services and have the authority to select the principal when there is a vacancy and to make recommendations to the principal for filling staff vacancies. (See Attachment A for complete list.)

SBDM is not an end in itself. Together with accountability it forms the underpinning of a system designed to increase student performance as defined by a set of valued learning outcomes. The rest of the system includes curriculum frameworks that communicate these goals, professional development in support of their implementation, and a corresponding set of new

assessment instruments that form the basis for accountability with consequences.

The valued learning outcomes convey a new vision of teaching and learning--one which begins with the premise that all students, regardless of background, can learn at much higher levels. This new vision emphasizes the need for students to understand concepts and apply new knowledge not simply memorize facts and isolated skills.

The new assessments therefore emphasize direct measures of performance and thinking. To produce these kinds of learning outcomes, curriculum and instruction have to shift from a focus on direct instruction in specific skills and facts to concepts and activities that engage students in problem solving, group work, and performances, such as writing essays and conducting experiments, with skills incorporated as needed.

Together with a range of additional supports, including on-site preschool and family resource centers, these components of KERA form an integrated vision of reform. This is the context in which SBDM must be viewed. Therefore the long-term goal of the research is to understand how SBDM connects to the rest of KERA and, specifically, to what extent and how SBDM contributes to the ultimate goal of transforming curriculum and instruction in ways that increase student performance.

3. Study Design

This report presents the results of the first year of a five-year study designed to evaluate progress in implementing SBDM. In this first year of the study, it is premature to look beyond the first steps involved in getting SBDM off the ground. My goal, therefore, was to track statewide progress in terms of numbers of schools with councils, training opportunities, and state policies and to understand how these play out in a sample of schools across the state chosen to reflect different geographic areas. I focused this year more on the state and school level; later years will also focus on the district.

Judgments about progress in implementing SBDM must also be grounded in the extent to which all the pieces are progressing because they are so intertwined. Since each has a different time line for full implementation, expectations for progress rest on how much is in place in a given year. (See Attachment B.)

What follows is based on a number of data sources. I interviewed KDE officials associated with SBDM, staff in the Office of Education Accountability (OEA), and collected documents from various associations and organizations as well as program advisories and other documents from the KDE. I visited seven SBDM schools across the state to interview teachers, principals, and parents, as well as some central office staff, interviewed teams

representing another six schools and four districts. My colleagues and I also visited schools not yet participating in SBDM. I reviewed several hundred articles from Kentucky newspapers and spoke with others consulting in and studying Kentucky. My interpretations are based on my analysis and synthesis of these data sources informed by my knowledge and experience in related research studies of education reform in districts and states across the country.*

4. Findings

Council Formation and Training. KERA requires all schools to have school-based decision making councils by the end of the 1995-96 school year. As of January 1991, at least one school in each district with more than one school had to establish a council either by voting or, if none did, by school board selection. Beyond those two requirements, any school can vote at any time to become an SBDM school with a two-thirds vote of their faculty.

Kentucky has 1366 schools in 176 independent and county districts. When school opened in the fall of 1991, 168 districts had at least one school with an SBDM council for a total of 327 schools. Of those, 287 had voted to participate and 40 had been selected by the local board. By December, a total of 370 schools had voted to establish councils. As of June 1992, at least 474 schools had created councils. The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) expects that number to top 500 when all district reports are received this summer.

The SBDM unit of KDE encouraged council formation through a grants competition in which they offered from $1000 to $5000 to districts that proposed plans to create an environment that would foster school council formation. Over 50 districts applied and 30 were funded (including a consortium of ten districts).

Once SBDM councils are formed, they face a number of major challenges from working together as a group to setting policies and making hiring recommendations. These are new roles for everyone; councils are often composed of six people who have little experience working as a member of a decision making team. Moreover, school councils are operating in a necessarily confusing climate, as state and local policymakers and administrators, and school councils begin to figure out what KERA really means in action.

Councils have some opportunities for training to assume their new roles. A number of organizations offer workshops and

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* Much of the data collection was done concurrently with two other projects to which I consult. My thanks to Paul Goren of the National Governors' Association studying barriers to systemic reform and to Patrick Shields of SRI International studying school reform for the U.S. Department of Education.

institutes for school councils. These include the Kentucky Education Association, the Kentucky School Boards Association, the Kentucky Association of School Administrators, Jefferson County Public School's Gheens Academy, the Kentucky Congress of Parents and Teachers, and several higher education institutions--in addition to KDE's SBDM staff of four. Most are one-time workshops ranging from a few hours to a full day or more; a few entail a series of sessions. There is little in the way of ongoing support for councils to continue to learn how to function effectively as a decision making body.

Early training has focused on what the law says, explaining the responsibilities of the school councils, and practical operating skills, including how to write by-laws, handle public comment, make decisions, resolve conflicts, and set policy. Council members were generally positive about their experiences as far as they went, but expressed the need for follow-up sessions once they had gotten going and were more aware of the issues facing them. Several were interested in opportunities to hear about and see what similar schools and their councils were doing.

Some workshops are held for school councils and others for district teams, including council members, district staff, and school board members. Little training has been tailored specifically for principals, parents, or teachers who each have very different perspectives and contributions as well as council-wide needs. Principals are rarely trained as consensus builders and team leaders, parents are not encouraged to participate in ways that maximize their strengths, and teachers are not helped to see their potential to significantly change curriculum and instruction. Few council members have had any experience in creating and analyzing budgets. KDE is working with a newly formed Kentucky Association of School Councils to create institutes for principals to be held regionally and built around a trainer of trainers model.

School Council Decision Making. School councils are up and running in schools that have voted to have SBDM. They meet regularly, typically in the evening so that parents and the public are able to attend. Most have large numbers of committees organized around their policy areas, grade levels, departments, or programs or some combination of these. Schools that have experience in some form of shared-decision making group are able to move more easily into SBDM, although they are also more likely to have concerns about KERA requirements for council composition which their previous council did not meet.

Councils usually operate by consensus although the decision-making process tends to be dictated, implicitly or explicitly, by the principal. Because the principal is the chair of the council, the administrative head of the school, and the evaluator of teachers, he/she exerts a major influence in determining how the council will operate. Therefore, the extent to which teachers and

parents are full partners in the process is very much a function of the principal's style. For example, among the schools visited in this study, four quite different styles were evident:

> *School 1*: Principal works with entire faculty to achieve consensus before bringing issues to the council.
>
> *School 2*: Principal has set up a structure of committees reporting to him/her in addition to the council.
>
> *School 3*: Principal continues to make decisions and involves the council only when challenged.
>
> *School 4*: Principal shares decision making with the council which receives input from a variety of committees as well as each member.

By far the most important decision councils felt they had made was selecting a new principal in schools with vacancies, followed by recommending candidates for other faculty and administrative vacancies. In these situations, the ability to choose the next principal was a powerful, concrete indicator that education decision making has changed. In schools with principals selected by the council, the council and other teachers felt strongly that they had made a good choice and, more importantly, a choice that would not have been made under the old system. Similarly, for teacher vacancies, council members, including the principal were deeply appreciative of the opportunity to have the major voice in who would join their staff.

> *"I would not have been hired had it not been for site-based [decision making]. They looked at my credentials and not my politics."* School Administrator

During their first full year of operation, councils spent much of their time on the infrastructure of the council--creating policies as required by law for their operation. Most council decisions were in the areas of discipline (especially with the issue of corporal punishment up in the air), extracurricular activities (from proms to cheerleader tryouts), and facilities (from cafeteria use to lockers).

Discussion and decisions about curriculum and instruction were less common and, when they did occur, tended to be marginal changes such as adding or subtracting a course or approving a department's textbook selection. A decade of research on various forms of site-based decision making suggests that this is

extremely common; in fact, it is the exception for schools to move into areas of curriculum and instruction without a clear sense of direction for change, school-based professional development, and, most of all, time. School councils in Kentucky follow the same pattern. Where significant changes in teaching practice are underway, these predate the formation of the council and reflect a school faculty already in the process of change under strong school or district leadership.

> *"I'm a force that demands change and supports innovation. I have spent 8 years shifting the direction of the curriculum. You don't change the thinking of adults quickly . . ."* School Administrator

Benefits and Concerns. SBDM has already had a major impact in Kentucky. Delegating significant authority to schools, SBDM communicates to local policymakers, educators, and the community that KERA represents a real and fundamental change in education. In view of the many start and stop reforms of the past two decades, this is a major accomplishment. The impact is visible in the number of schools that have already chosen to form school councils.

SBDM also ensures strong ties between parents and their schools by requiring parent members on the council. Together, SBDM, at-risk preschool, and the family and youth centers all provide ways for families to re-engage with their schools. Community support for education, both inside and outside the school, is essential for school improvement. Ultimately, the potential of KERA to significantly change the relationship between communities and their schools may prove to be its most important and lasting impact.

The fact that school council meetings must be announced publicly has led to wide news coverage of elections and meetings. Moreover, SBDM itself has proved a newsworthy subject. Newspapers across the state have reported on progress, as well as conflicts, in council formation and action in local schools. Such coverage provides the public with a larger window on what is going on in their schools.

From council members' perspective, the main immediate benefits of SBDM are the ability to hire staff when vacancies arise, especially the principal, and, for parents, an official voice in school policy. Council members also express the view that instructionally-related decisions belong at the school level.

> *"I'm all for site-based [decision making] because nobody knows more what the school needs than we do."* Teacher

These benefits are apparent in spite of the major hurdles and inevitable conflicts entailed in decentralizing decision making to schools. There are certainly conflicts--large and small. They range from allegations of local officials undermining school councils to those of teachers claiming the council does not represent them and parents claiming lack of notification of meeting times. Yet these very conflicts may be the clearest indication of progress; an absence of conflict would strongly suggest an absence of change.

> *"Even if [SBDM] recreates politics at the school level, at least it is politics involving those with a direct stake in what's happening."* Parent

Many issues are attributable to the transition from one system to another. Questions of clarification on certain definitions (for example, eligibility criteria for teacher and parent council members) are easy to resolve (but may be revisited as needed). Confusion over who really has authority over what decisions--legislature, KDE, local school board, superintendent, principal, school council, individual teachers, parents, and students--takes time to work out and, with patience, should not detract from the ultimate focus on student learning.

Staffing and budgets are especially complicated. Across the nation, few districts (and no states) allocate the bulk of the budget to school sites. Those that do face tricky issues of how to value a staff position that could be filled by a beginning teacher with a lower salary or an experienced teacher with a higher salary. Such issues are further complicated by confusion around when a vacancy is really a vacancy, how staff positions are defined, interactions with bargaining agreements where they exist (especially around seniority), and issues of transfers and dismissals. Similarly, delegation of budgetary authority entails consideration of access to funds (where the money is) and the creation of accounting systems that support decentralized budgeting. KDE is currently experimenting with allocations that include staffing as well as materials and supplies to gather information to help clarify these issues. Their pilot involves 13 SBDM schools in 6 pilot districts.

A number of concerns revolve around council composition and term limits. Respondents, especially in larger schools and those with pre-existing councils, questioned the exclusion of classified staff and students. This has proved particularly troublesome in Jefferson County where schools have participatory management councils (PM) whose composition is determined by the individual school. These often include classified staff, sometimes students, may not include parents, and is not necessarily chaired by the principal. Clearly the intent of the legislation was to insure representation of both parents and

teachers as well as school administration. Respondents suggested that the legislative intent to include both teachers and parents as well as school administration could be met in ways other than a strict 3:2:1 ratio.

Respondents also expressed concerns around lack of continuity with one-year terms. Several suggested overlapping two-year terms; some parent members, on the other hand, strongly supported one-year limits fearing a concentration of power with longer terms.

Of broader concern is the issue of attracting parents and teachers to serve on their school councils. Some schools, especially in rural communities, are having difficulty finding parents who are not district employees. Most parents willing to be active in their children's schools work for the largest employer in town--the school district. Teachers are also hesitant to serve on school councils, especially after having done so once. They cite time pressures and the dislike of making socially unpopular decisions--especially those involving personnel.

Schools that have voted and rejected forming councils explain either that they feel they already have enough input into decisions or that they do not want the restrictions of the KERA SBDM specifications for membership or that they feel overwhelmed with the other KERA responsibilities, especially the primary program, and want to wait.

The hesitance to take on site decision making, either as an individual teacher or a school faculty, is understandable during the transition years from the old system to the new one. The reasons for change and the goals for change are still quite vague (beyond knowing that KERA requires certain changes). As the rest of KERA falls into place, teachers will have a clearer idea what is expected of them. In the absence of that vision, there is not a guiding focus to decision making or an external rationale to support difficult personnel decisions. This leaves thousands of decisions open to the council and their committees, and combined with lack of experience in operating efficient meetings, teachers spend many hours preparing for and attending council meetings. As principals develop leadership skills for collaborative decision making, the balance of time invested and benefits will begin to shift. And as school councils begin to tackle issues of schedules, they will create ways for teachers to have the time to serve as council members.

> *"SBDM is a great system [but] inconceivable that you have only two years to get up to the threshold. It takes a council a year and a half just to get their feet on the ground. To have to come in and start making decisions right away, it will end up being sheer crisis management by people who have no background in decision making."* Parent.

5. Challenges Ahead

Implementing all of KERA is a massive undertaking. SBDM, the critical underpinning of KERA, is off to a strong start. But there are major hurdles ahead. Four challenges in particular bear watching and learning from over the next few years: shifting from adversarial relationships to partnerships, focusing school decision making on teaching and learning, ensuring ongoing opportunities for on-the-job professional development, and finding the right balance between state and district requirements on the one hand and school council discretion on the other.

Partners Not Adversaries. By shifting the authority to make instructionally important decisions to the school, SBDM changes power relationships between the state and districts, district and schools, principal and teachers, as well as between parents and their schools. Many of these relationships are historically adversarial. The transition to a fully implemented new system will naturally heighten pre-existing tensions at first and sparks will continue to fly for a while. Massive education reform cannot happen without all the players working together toward shared goals. All levels of the system and the school community must work in tandem, moving in the same direction.

Inside schools, teachers, parents, and administrators must also work collaboratively. The components of KERA, including schoolwide accountability, the primary program, and SBDM, are designed to create new collaborative relationships inside schools. But this runs counter to the deeply ingrained culture of teacher isolation in most schools. Few teachers have worked collaboratively in their own schooling or teaching. There are many barriers to collaborative work in addition to tradition. These include lack of models of how to do it (including the way most professional development is organized), schedules that leave little or no time for planning together, and the architecture of school buildings. The transition from adversarial relationships to collaboration takes shared goals, leadership, and time.

Focus for Decision Making. KERA is intended to send signals to schools about new learning goals for students but the signals are not very strong yet. The signals include: the new assessments, but not all teachers and very few parents have seen them; curriculum frameworks; criteria for exiting the primary program; professional development around the kinds of instruction that prepare students to perform well on the new assessments; and opportunities for individual schools to translate the state's valued student outcomes for their students. At the same time, teachers still receive strong signals from sources other than the state such as the federal Chapter 1 compensatory education program which requires standardized achievement tests and tends therefore to maintain an isolated skills orientation.

School councils could meet 24 hours a day seven days a week making decisions about everything from the purchase and placement

of a copier to changing the school discipline policy. Without leadership that helps create a shared set of goals and a schoolwide focus on a new vision for teaching and learning, there is no way to prioritize the council's work. Councils need to set priorities and these need to be driven by the desired performance outcomes for students: What do we want students to know and be able to do? What kinds of learning experiences produce those outcomes? What do we need to do as a school to create those experiences? When all the signals are in place, they will send reinforcing messages which will help create and maintain a focus on student learning.

Opportunities for Learning. The goals of KERA are not simply a matter of teachers individually learning a new set of concepts and instructional strategies to replace the old. Achieving the goals requires the development of a problem solving culture in each school where teachers, administrators, and parents work together to determine what is in the way of student learning and how to overcome it. Creating a problem solving culture requires time to work together in teams and access to sources of information about best practices, opportunities for professional growth, and time to learn. Analogous reform efforts in the corporate world rest on empowering and enabling employees. They provide both the authority and the know-how to do the job differently. Typically, corporate efforts take many years and, unlike schools, are able to provide teams with several weeks or even months off from their regular responsibilities to redefine their roles and how they will work together.

> *"The firms that failed in participatory management are the ones who did not invest in training and resources--and the training never stops."* Kentucky corporate manager.

Council members need exposure to effective decision making models. They need to develop skills in strategic planning, setting priorities, minimizing meeting time, conflict resolution, and delegating decisions and many other collaborative problem solving skills. Principals need to learn new ways of leading and enabling staff to improve. Teachers need team skills as well as access to new knowledge about teaching, learning, and subject matter content. Parents need to understand the valued student outcomes and how they are supported by new instruction and assessment.

Specifications Versus Flexibility. Any organization that decentralizes faces the challenge of balancing what is determined by people at the top of the organization and what is determined by those at the bottom. The premise of KERA is that the state sets broad goals, provides schools with the flexibility, knowledge, and help needed to reach them, and holds schools accountable for student performance. In a system characterized in

the past by prescriptions from the top, the natural response from those at the bottom is to press for clarification and for those at the top to respond with requirements and procedures that in fact limit flexibility inside schools. These instincts are especially strong in the early stages of reform; people push for clarification on procedural issues when the overarching goals and purposes for change are not clear.

If the ambiguity and uncertainty that necessarily accompany major organizational change results in narrowing school council discretion by limiting choices and requiring approval each step of the way, the logic of KERA could be compromised. State policymakers need to guard against this and school councils need to push the boundaries--to ensure that alternatives to state or local prescriptions are possible. Schools will change only with pressure from the top. KERA does this. The top will change only with pressure from the bottom. SBDM makes this possible.

6. Conclusions

Signs of progress in SBDM are visible across the state. Hundreds of schools are involved, elections have been held, and councils are up and running. School councils are making decisions and bringing schools and their communities closer together. Even where councils have not yet formed, SBDM stimulates discussion. Signs of confusion and conflict provide convincing evidence that real change is in progress.

This kind of fundamental transformation barely begins to unfold in a little over one year. Forming new relationships and putting all the pieces together takes time. Across Kentucky the 1990-92 biennium has begun to lay the foundation for SBDM in later years. By raising many critical issues from who sees the budget to who really has authority over hiring, SBDM is off to a strong start across the state. As the rest of the parts of KERA are implemented, the potential for SBDM to recreate schools as centers of inquiry for adults and students will increase dramatically.

ATTACHMENT A

KERA (KRS 160.345) states, in part, that the school council shall:

- have the responsibility to set school policy consistent with district board policy which shall provide an environment to enhance the students' achievement and help the school meet the goals established by [legislation]

- determine the frequency of and agenda for their meetings

- determine, within the parameters of the total available funds, the number of persons to be employed in each job classification at the school. The council may make personnel decisions on vacancies occurring after the school council is formed but shall not have the authority to recommend transfers or dismissals.

- which textbooks, instructional materials and student support services shall be provided in the school.

- From a list of applicants submitted by the local superintendent, the principal at the participating school shall select personnel to fill vacancies, after consultation with the school council. If the vacancy to be filled is the position of principal, the school council shall select the new principal from among those persons recommended by the local superintendent. [The council cannot transfer or dismiss personnel.]

In addition, the school council shall adopt a policy to be implemented by the principal in the following additional areas:

- determination of curriculum, including needs assessment and curriculum development.

- assignment of all instructional and non-instructional staff time.

- assignment of students to classes and programs within the school.

- determination of the schedule of the school day and week, subject to the beginning and ending times of the school day and school calendar year as established by the local board.

- determination of use of school space during the school day.

- planning and resolution of issues regarding instructional practices.

- selection and implementation of discipline and classroom management techniques, including responsibilities of the student, parent, teacher, counselor, and principal.

- selection of extracurricular programs and determination of policies relating to student participation based on academic qualifications and attendance requirements, program evaluation and supervision.

- procedures, consistent with local school board policy, for determining alignment with state standards, technology utilization, and program appraisal.

ATTACHMENT B

Implementation Schedule for Selected KERA Components

KERA Component	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96
SBDM	1 sch. per district				all schools
Performance outcomes	75 defined				
Ungraded Primary		all schools			
Curriculum Frameworks			all to be available		
Assessment (annual 4, 8, 12)	interim testing			all new assessments ready	
Accountability	baseline		rewards & sanctions		rewards & sanctions
Regional Service Centers	TBA				
Professional Development	$5 per student	$16 per student *	*		
Distinguished Educators		5			
Family Resource & Youth Service Centers	25% of schools	25% of schools **	25% of schools **	25% of schools **	

* In 1992-93 and 1993-94 up to five instructional days may be used for professional development as determined by the district. Only programs on the state approved list can be considered for these days.

** Due to budgetary constraints, the centers may be implemented over five years instead of four as originally anticipated.

JANE L. DAVID

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ASSESSMENT OF FAMILY RESOURCE AND YOUTH SERVICES CENTERS

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July 1992

Executive Summary

ASSESSMENT OF FAMILY RESOURCE AND YOUTH SERVICES CENTERS:
A FIRST YEAR REPORT TO THE PRICHARD COMMITTEE

By Phillip W. Roeder
Department of Political Science, University of Kentucky
July 1992

Family Resource and Youth Services Centers are successfully meeting student's physical and emotional needs and preparing students for a full day of learning, saying that local leadership and support is essential to the Centers, according to a recent study conducted by Phillip Roeder, a University of Kentucky political science professor, for the Prichard Committee for Academic Excellence.

In painting a positive, yet balanced, portrait of the first year of center operations, Dr. Roeder reviews the background, evaluates the reasons for early success, and identifies potential future problems.

The Kentucky Education Reform Act of 1990 (KERA) mandated the creation of Family Resource and Youth Services Centers. These centers, to be located in or near schools with at least 20 percent of students eligible for free or subsidized school meals, are designed to "ensure that needy children and families receive services to solve problems that prevent children from doing their best in school."

During the 1991-92 school year, 133 centers were established to serve 232 schools.

In his study, Dr. Roeder finds that most Family Resource/Youth Services Centers are successfully addressing the emotional, physical and social needs of students thus preparing students to learn as required within the framework of KERA; providing a link between schools, students and their families; and cultivating community relationships beyond the Centers.

The program's emergence supports the premise behind the centers -- that **parents and families are key factors in student academic achievement.**

Dr. Roeder draws a number of conclusions and lessons. His observations suggest that:

(1) in the first year of funding, centers have been established where schools and communities are "ready," or are enthusiastic about the program. Those involved are likely to remain positive if they understand that the Centers are here to stay;

(2) center resources must be sufficient and flexible, both from the center itself and from community agencies;

(3) local center staff must be autonomous enough to resolve their own problems and to meet community needs while staying within state guidelines and education reform principles;

(4) center staff, especially the coordinator, should blend experience in the schools, community and health service network with creativity and entrepreneurial skills;

(5) center staff must build "trust and teamwork" among school and district administrators, students, families and the Center staff;

(6) centers will thrive in an environment with support, cooperation and leadership that starts from executives in the school district; and

(7) center 'organizational ownership' -- be it the state Department of Education, the Cabinet for Human Resources, plus local involvement -- is key to future growth. Questions must be answered, including: what institution ultimately will oversee the centers? What will be the funding source(s) for centers -- state, local or a combination? Can the initial enthusiasm which launched the centers be sustained?

The investigator stresses that Family Resource/Youth Services Centers' Advisory Councils should be more closely connected to school councils. In other words, coordination of local involvement in education can enhance overall progress in the schools and the communities.

This first-year assessment is based on site visits to six centers and interviews with many school, community and government people involved in education reform and Family Resource/Youth Services Centers, plus analysis of program data from state and local agencies.

ASSESSMENT OF FAMILY RESOURCE AND YOUTH SERVICES CENTERS: A FIRST YEAR REPORT TO THE PRICHARD COMMITTEE

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SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This first-year assessment of Family Resource and Youth Services Centers is based on interviews with many individuals involved in the adoption and implementation of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) and the Centers, as well as analysis of program data gathered early in the implementation process by state and local agencies. The individuals interviewed represent diverse organizations and interests in state government and in selected local communities and school districts. Six Centers across the Commonwealth were site-visited by the author in May 1992.

This assessment attempts to provide a balanced, objective picture of the program as of the summer of 1992. It is intended to highlight successes in the early stages of implementation, raise appropriate questions concerning factors that might be inhibiting successful implementation, and discuss what lessons have been learned about Centers and what adjustments, if any, might need to be made in KERA legislation or its administration at the state or local level. The following summarize the findings of this initial assessment:

** The concept of locating Family Resource and Youth Services Centers in or near the schools is sound. The policy theory relating family and child well-being to student achievement is plausible.

** The policy proposal was developed carefully and thoroughly based on previous research and experiences in other states with similar programs. The Centers program within KERA is a well-designed component of the total education reform package.

** The policy has been implemented quickly but effectively. Early implementation has been relatively successful. Administration by the Cabinet for Human Resources (CHR) has been flexible, appropriate, and light-handed. The program is not a rigid, top-down system. Local autonomy is substantial and meaningful.

** The Interagency Task Force has been effective in setting policy and overseeing program implementation.

** Center Advisory Councils are in place with varying degrees of participation and leadership.

** Local Centers and Advisory Councils are exercising judgment and making decisions within the policy framework and these actions are encouraged and respected by the state agency. Few, if any, local respondents expressed concerns about this aspect of the program.

** Mandated services and optional services are being coordinated and delivered either directly or indirectly through Advisory Council and Center efforts. Councils and Centers have developed priorities based on community needs assessments and are investing resources based on those priorities. Services are being provided through advocacy and

coordination efforts of Centers with many success stories of children and families being helped.

** Parents and students involved with the Advisory Councils and Centers seem satisfied with the services provided or available.

** Teachers and administrators in schools with funded Centers are supportive of the program and its early implementation.

** State funding of Centers is viewed as adequate by most Center Coordinators.

** Councils and Centers have been relatively successful in developing and extending cooperative relationships with service providers in their communities and in acquiring additional resources from the community. Also, school districts and other local agencies have contributed much additional resources to the operation of the Centers.

** Coordinators and staff of the local Centers view state staff in the Family Resource Center (CHR) as helpful, flexible, and positive.

** Coordination, information sharing, and planning between the Cabinet for Human Resources, other state Cabinets and agencies, and the Department of Education have been free of any major problems. The relationship between CHR and DOE is evolving positively as each group learns of the expertise of the other.

** CHR Monitoring and reporting requirements, although not without some complaints, are not viewed negatively by Center Coordinators. Most Coordinators see the reporting as necessary and important, however they also see room for some improvements in the process.

** Although a formal evaluation plan relating program inputs to outcomes as part of an automated, management information system has not yet been developed, monitoring through quarterly reports is ongoing and effective. In addition, 33 Centers have been assessed through "in-depth monitoring" including site visits by a team of state officials. Planning for systematic, quantitative, and comparative evaluation is occurring through the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee of the Interagency Task Force.

** Although no problems or conflicts have been identified, there is not yet a policy or plan devoted to how Advisory Councils and Centers will relate to the site-based decision-making component of KERA. Specifically, how will Center Advisory Councils relate to School Councils? In those Centers located in schools with active School Councils, few problems have been identified. This appears to be due to some overlap in membership on the two "governing" or "policy-making" bodies.

"The family is nature's original department of health, education, and human services."

(Michael Novak. 1987. The New Consensus on Family and Welfare. Wash., D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, p.16)

POLICY BACKGROUND

The Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990 was designed as a multi-faceted, long-term solution to many interrelated and complex problems facing Kentucky's education system. Because the reform was not intended to be and could not be a "quick-fix," any early assessments of implementation must caution that for many questions and issues, it is "too soon to tell." Baseline data can be gathered, initial implementation processes and decisions can be evaluated, and preliminary judgments can be made, however any type of closure at this point would be premature and unfair. There are presently many more questions than answers, and the story of KERA continues to unfold.

This assessment examines only one of the many innovations in KERA - Family Resource and Youth Services Centers. In some contrast to the more direct educational components of KERA such as school-based decision-making, ungraded primary schools, performance assessment/rewards and sanctions, preschool for four-year olds and the like, Family Resource and Youth Services Centers deal with the physical and emotional health and economic needs of children and families.

There are two related questions to be answered in this ongoing assessment of Centers:

The policy implementation question is whether the Interagency Task Force and local Centers are carrying out the legislative mandate and spending public funds as intended by the designers of the policy?

The policy impact question is whether Centers are having a positive impact on the well-being of families and children through increased access to needed health and social services provided either through improved system coordination or creation of new services? [1]

Despite the many organizational and program complexities and the potential for problems in implementing Family Resource and Youth Services Centers in Kentucky schools, the initial assessment suggests the answers to both questions are positive. Why does the program seem to be working well, and how can initial success be maintained? What issues might cause difficulties in the future?

Defining Family Resource and Youth Services Centers

The KERA legislation states that Centers are designed to "ensure that needy children and families receive services to solve problems that prevent children from doing their best in school." The primary means to accomplish this goal is to "identify and coordinate

existing resources." The mission statement of the Interagency Task Force charged with responsibility for implementing and evaluating this component of KERA is:

"Promote the flow of resources and support to families in ways to strengthen their functioning and enhance the growth and development of individual members and the family unit."

What services to "solve problems" of children or to "strengthen family functioning" are to be coordinated by the Centers? The KERA legislation states that Centers must at minimum address the following components:

Family Resource Centers:

assistance with full-time child care for children ages two and three
assistance with after-school child care for children 4-12
health and education services for new and expectant parents
support and training for child day care providers
health services or referral to health services, or both
education to enhance parenting skills and education for preschool parents and their children

Youth Services Centers:

health services or referral to health services
referral to social services
employment counselling, training and placement for youth
summer and part-time job development for youth
substance abuse services or referral to such services
family crisis and mental health counselling or referral

Prior to and during operation of the Centers, needs assessments of families and students are to be conducted to help the local Advisory Councils, Center and school staff, and service providers develop and access programs and services most needed in the school and the community. Because of different needs across communities, Centers likely will vary in the mix of optional services offered beyond the required services listed above. Also, since the legislation does not specify how the mandated services are to be provided, it is also likely that Councils and Centers will vary in how they deal with the mandated services.

Centers are to be located in or near schools with at least twenty percent of students eligible for free or subsidized school meals. Family Resource Centers are to serve elementary school children and families, and Youth Services Centers are for middle and high school students and families. To implement and oversee this component of KERA, the legislation mandated that the Governor appoint a sixteen-member Interagency Task Force responsible

for developing a five-year plan of implementation, a process to award grants to school districts for initiation and operation of Centers, and a system of monitoring compliance and performance.

The Task Force has organized several Committees involving staff from numerous agencies of state government to accomplish these tasks. Committees such as Legislative, Program Design, Resource Identification, and Finance and Eligibility were initiated soon after the establishment of the Task Force in June 1990. A Committee on Evaluation and Monitoring was established in 1991. In addition, a Parent and Youth Advisory Committee to the Task Force has ben appointed with members nominated by the local Center Advisory Councils. The Task Force and Committees have met regularly to carry out the mission and functions.

Although funds for the Centers are appropriated to the Kentucky Department of Education (DOE) as part of KERA, the grants to operate Centers are administered by the Cabinet for Human Resources (CHR) under the direction of the Interagency Task Force. The CHR also staffs the Interagency Task Force and provides support and technical assistance as well as monitors and evaluates the Centers. A branch of the CHR - the Family Resource Center is the unit responsible for these tasks.

The Centers were appropriated $9.5 million in the first year of operation. Governor Jones' Executive Budget requested $18.9 million for the second year as proposed originally in the KERA legislation, however the 1992 General Assembly cut the Governor's request to $15.9 million. These funds as part of KERA go to the DOE and are transferred to the CHR. (Possible issues relating to this budgetary arrangement are discussed later in this report.)

One key component of program implementation is that school districts compete for these funds to initiate and staff the Councils and Centers. The more than 1000 schools eligible for Center funding are not mandated to participate in the first year of operation; instead, Centers will be brought on-line in stages. The implication of this staged implementation and competition decision is that early adopters are likely to be schools with enthusiasm for the concept and in some cases with experience in dealing with health and human service agencies in their community. Early adopters are more likely to be "ready" for the innovation, and the first stage of implementation is more likely to be successful.

As an example of the staged process, in the first year of funding (1991-92), 133 Centers serving 232 schools were awarded grants and began operations. The awards in the first year of operation ranged from $10,800 to $90,000 and averaged $68,100. The amounts awarded are based on a formula allocation of $200/year per student eligible for the subsidized lunch program in the school up to a maximum of $90,000.

Although not detailed in the legislation, the policy theory implied by this description of Centers is that these new "linking mechanisms" or coordinating entities located in or

near schools will help increase and improve the access of children and families to needed health and human services. More effective delivery of existing services and creation of new services will help improve the physical and emotional well-being of children and families which in turn will lead to improved student academic performance. Although there are several assumptions embedded in this policy theory, the most basic assumption is that **parents and families are key factors in student academic achievement.**[2]

ASSESSMENT OF LOCAL CENTERS

Although future assessments will rely more on quantitative program data as they are gathered over time by state agencies and by the Centers themselves, this initial assessment uses a case-study approach with several Centers selected for direct observation and analysis based on interviews with Center and school staff, Advisory Council members, and parents, students, and others in the community. There are several justifications for this approach. First, a comparative, quantitative approach is expensive and time-consuming for both the researchers and the subjects. Second, there is not yet any consensus on what objects or behaviors should be measured and why, how reliable and valid these measures would be, and how the data would be collected by evaluators (whether outside or inside the program) with minimal disruption of the activities and routines of the organizations.[3]

Which centers were selected for site visits and what is the rationale for the selection? It was decided that Centers would be selected based on size, geography (regions of the state and urban/rural) and types of Centers (Family Resource, Youth Services, or combined Centers). Consultations with knowledgeable observers of KERA and the Centers in and out of state government led to selection of the Centers in Tables 1 and 2. The Centers selected are not presented as a random or even representative sample of the population of 133 Centers, however they do meet the above criteria and provide many examples of important implementation issues.

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TABLE 1
CENTER FINANCES[a]

Center	State Grant	School Contrib	Commun Contrib
Estes Elem (u)[b]	77,000	-	11,070
Porter Elem (r)	50,800	31,538	45,897
Breckinridge Elem (u)	52,600	13,900	8,725
Fulton County (r)	90,000	8,408	1,514
Caldwell County (r)	90,000	2,375	292
Fairdale H.S. (s)	90,000	37,525	22,185

TABLE 2
CENTER ACTIVITIES[a]

Center	Contacts Qtr Y/D	Partic Qtr Y/D	Households Qtr Y/D	Free[c] Meals
Estes Elem (u)[b]	300 967	89 289	96 300	385 (83)
Porter Elem (r)	278 1745	529 427	173 212	254 (46)
Breckinridge Elem (u)	68 182	42 107	22 57	277 (85)
Fulton County (r)	437 570	114 130	42 50	375 (57)
				92 (46)
Caldwell County (r)	2337 3739	115 176	51 83	199 (38)
				147 (28)
				117 (23)
Fairdale H.S. (s)	1012 2860	970 970	323 657	368 (36)
				154 (75)

a. The data are taken from the third quarter reports (Jan-March, 1992) and first-year grant proposals. Fairdale (Jefferson County) has a Youth Services Center, Breckinridge (Jefferson County), Estes (Owensboro) and Porter (Johnson County) have Family Resource Centers, and Caldwell County and Fulton County have Combined Centers.

b. u (urban), s (suburban), r (rural)

c. The column for Free Meals is the number of students eligible for the federally subsidized meal program (with percentage of the total student enrollment in parentheses). Multiple numbers indicate multiple sites.

Given that these data are from the first nine months of operation of a complex and innovative program, and given that several issues of reporting and monitoring are still being assessed and discussed by state and local staff, these data should be interpreted with much caution. For example, the issue of what is a participant and what is a contact is not without some ambiguity and confusion. Although there is nothing in regulations or practice that suggests a participant is more important or somehow "counts" more than a contact, some Coordinators are concerned over how these categories are differentiated and how the data might be used or interpreted.

When does a contact become a participant with an official record opened and a Household Profile completed? There are two related components of the issue - one relates to system or organizational politics and future program support, and the other relates to the intensity of interactions between staff and individuals and how this is measured or counted. In terms of territory or turf contests, the issue might be, "there may be plenty of contacts to go around, but only so many participants or families." In terms of helping families and gaining political support to preserve or expand needed programs, the issue might be "how do programs get credit for the time and energy devoted to working with complex cases that might not be reflected in these counts?"

These data, while providing some indications of Council and Center performance, do not always account for the full impact of Center programs, especially in regard to less tangible and more difficult to measure and count aspects such as student and staff morale, community support, service agency cooperation, student and family emotional and physical well-being, and the like. Collecting reliable and valid data in these areas over time for all Centers presents a major evaluation challenge for state and local officials.

Location of Centers

The Centers site-visited all are located in the school building or in an adjacent building that is easily accessible by students. Center staff interviewed believe this is the optimal arrangement, with all wanting Centers close to students and teachers (this view apparently is not unanimous in that some program participants, staff, and observers believe there are reasons to have a Center located near but not in a school). Center staff report and site-visits confirm the occurrence of regular "walk-in" traffic by students (and sometimes parents) needing immediate attention. In some cases, the Centers have separate phone lines and separate entrances so that participants do not have to go through the school office or the school phone system to gain access to the Center. These location-related decisions help to symbolize the separate identification and functions of the Centers within the school building, and also sometimes make it easier or less intimidating for students and parents to seek information or help from the Centers.

It should be emphasized that physical location is not the same as organizational

location. Although Centers should be in or very near the school building, they are separate organizationally. If Centers were a unit of the schools administered through the local school board and the DOE they likely would become absorbed into the existing school structure or culture which KERA is trying to modify or reform. They are an important component of KERA located in the schools but are not organizationally part of the school system.

Center Staff

Given the limited resources available, but potentially large demands and high expectations for Centers, the job of Coordinator is crucial to success. Writing a job description for a Center Coordinator poses a special challenge because of the many important roles they must play for the Centers to be successful. The following list of roles is not exhaustive and the roles overlap somewhat, but the brief descriptions give some idea of the complexities and demands of the job. What do Coordinators do in the course of a typical day or week?

They are parent and student advocates. Whether in the school or in the service network, families and children sometimes need someone to represent their interests in encounters with individuals and agencies with power over their lives. This sensitive and difficult role places some pressure on Coordinators who have to maintain positive relationships with school personnel and service providers as well as children and parents, however effective advocacy often can be done in subtle and non-threatening ways.

They assist educational team-members. A major goal of Center programs is to have reasonably secure and healthy children in the classroom ready to learn and succeed academically. Coordinators must work closely with professional educators in identifying, assessing, and solving problems that interfere with that goal. For this team approach to work, teachers must view Center Coordinators as competent peers working with them to help students and families.

They assist case-managers. Many children and families have multiple problems requiring the intervention of separate programs or agencies. Center coordinators as program generalists ensure that there is communication between the different providers and between the participant and family members to maximize effective treatment of the individual or the family. They do not duplicate the work of case-managers in service agencies already involved with children or families.

They are system facilitators or coordinators. Service agencies develop their own routines and behaviors, often focusing narrowly on their needs, programs, services, and clients. To bridge these gaps and interests and to link categorical programs to better serve families, a knowledgeable and energetic facilitator is needed.

They are system-builders. Not only must Coordinators induce existing providers and agencies to work together, share information, and share clients, but they sometimes must help create new services or new networks of service providers. For example, a commu-

nity might need a spouse-abuse center. The Coordinator has to know how to pull together many elements of the community to help initiate and plan such an undertaking.

There are many other related terms or descriptors that could be used for Center Coordinators including catalysts, community organizers, or problem-solvers, however these brief descriptions help to convey the complexity and challenge of these newly-created positions. As the descriptions suggest, it is not likely that someone with little job experience or little experience in the school system or the service network would be successful in these roles. Although a particular educational background is probably less important than these job experiences, coordinators tend to have backgrounds or college degrees in social work and teaching. Many of them stress the importance of gaining the trust and respect of school and service agency personnel, so these backgrounds help build these relationships.

Although sound hiring practices are important, most successful organizations recognize that background and educational experience are not sufficient to maintain and improve job skills. After skilled and experienced Coordinators are hired, training and technical assistance should be provided to gain new knowledge and expand or upgrade job skills. Coordinators indicate that some of this has been available and has been valuable for some. In addition to formal training, a strong, informal network of Coordinators has developed to also provide information, advice, and mutual support.

The need for knowledgeable, experienced, skilled, and committed individuals to work as Coordinators is apparent, and it will be important to assess the degree to which a sufficient pool of such individuals exists for future Centers. Also it will be important to assess the extent to which the complex demands of the job might lead to "burn-out" of committed and energetic individuals.

Advisory Councils

How have Advisory Councils been implemented and how much control do they have? What are expectations for them? Advisory Councils appear to be functioning as intended; that is, if the intentions of the legislation are clear. In the Centers studied, the Councils meet regularly and have the required mix of individuals including parents and representatives of local service agencies. In most cases they appear to be operating as policy boards and are not much involved in day-to-day management of the Centers, except that principals and some parents serving on the Councils often are involved in day-to-day activities. Certain issues of how they will deal with hiring decisions and how they will relate to School Councils have yet to be addressed by most Centers and Advisory Councils. For example, will the Advisory Councils hire Center Coordinators or other staff or are these decisions made by the school system and/or the school principal or the School Council (perhaps with Advisory Council involvement and approval)?

In practice, how do Advisory Councils relate to School Councils? In Fulton County,

there is a School Council as well as the Advisory Council for the combined Center, however not much planning has been devoted to this issue, probably for some very good reasons. First, there is overlap and communication between the two bodies with school principals serving on both along with one other staff person or parent. Second, staff involved with each body have many pressing tasks to complete, and are not likely to deal with organizational questions until they become issues affecting operations. In the case of Center Advisory Councils and School Councils, it may be a reasonable strategy to let the processes work themselves out and deal with problems as they emerge. It may not be possible or desirable for state staff or legislation to specify in any detail how the Councils are to operate. The present practice of state staff appears to be based on principles of organizational learning, decentralization, and empowerment of Advisory Councils.

Service Coordination and Provision

What services are being coordinated and how are they delivered? Who is being served by Center programs? The brief answers to these questions are that Advisory Councils and Centers are ensuring that mandated services listed previously (as well as certain optional services) are being provided and many children and families at-risk and needing help are being served.

Health care services not only are mandated by the legislation, but are identified through needs assessments as a priority by many Councils and Centers. Centers approach this priority in a variety of ways. Estes FRC has a "branch" of the local Health Department co-located within the Center. The Hager Foundation located in Owensboro and the Health Department fund a full-time nurse and secretary who do health education, physical exams, and the like for students. The Foundation and others involved expect this component to become self-supporting within a year or so using reimbursements for services by Medicaid and other sources.

Some Councils and Centers prefer that the local Health Department provide these nursing or health services at the local Health Department facility. Although some Centers go further and feel that even hiring a Center nurse would duplicate service offered by the Health Department, other Centers have hired a nurse as part of the Center staff and certain services are provided by that individual in the Center. Porter FRC has hired a nurse who performs many important functions within the Center, but still contracts with the Health Department for some services such as physicals and immunizations.

In terms of the pros and cons of these various approaches and the many complex issues of liability, training, equipment, transportation, and reimbursement for health care services, the concept of local autonomy would encourage each Council and Center to develop its own strategy for providing these important services.

Another example of variation in providing mandated services is child care. Family

Resource Centers are mandated to assist with full-time child care for two and three-year olds and after-school care for four to twelve year-olds, and Centers appear to be doing this as needed in their community. Some have day care on site. Porter School in Johnson County has day care for 2-3 year-olds. Other Centers worked to obtain more slots for child-care in the existing network of providers in their community.

Most Councils and Centers indicate the initial survey of needs was very important for setting direction of the Center. Although it seems obvious to say, if services being offered are not what students and parents need then Centers won't be successful. Despite the obvious nature of this statement, it appears that a few of the 133 Centers did not take it seriously or did not know how to do needs assessments and managed to get started without good information on community needs. Also, it may be that as more reluctant schools and districts obtain Center funding, they might be less willing and able to conduct effective needs assessments and more likely to struggle to fulfill an ambiguous mission.

There is variation in the types and quality of needs assessments performed by the various Councils and Centers. Some are sophisticated and effective and some simple and effective, and a few may be neither. The Interagency Task Force and state staff are discussing the extent to which more direction and assistance in needs assessment should be provided to existing and forthcoming Centers. Discussion is also occurring over the degree to which needs assessment should be included in the formal evaluation efforts.

Home visits are viewed as important by several Councils and Centers. They help get parents involved in their children's education and help Center and school staff understand some of the problems and difficulties faced by children and parents. Also, some Centers are becoming more involved in recreation activities, not only as an identified priority need but also as a means to get more children and families aware of and involved in Council and Center programs.

Cooperation and Collaboration

How are Councils and Centers working with the state staff in CHR, with the local school system, and with local service providers? What are the results of this collaboration? In successful Centers, there is a positive, cooperative relationship among all these actors which usually was already somewhat in place prior to KERA. In some Centers, earlier programs helped set the stage or provide a foundation for improved systems collaboration through the Centers. A primary example of such a program is KIDS - the Kentucky Integrated Delivery System. Three of the schools studied (Estes, Porter, and Fulton County) had this program beginning in 1988/1989.

The goal of the state-initiated KIDS Program was to coordinate community service providers and provide " intensive, direct services to targeted low-income families to promote school adjustment and progress and to reduce the drop-out rate." Inter-agency

agreements were established among local agencies to provide coordinated services to small numbers of at-risk families. "Agency representatives worked cooperatively to establish agency strengths and weaknesses in service delivery, surveyed the needs of the population in terms of resources and services, and developed a program of service delivery based on communication, cooperation, and collaboration of all agencies." It is apparent that schools that had been involved in the KIDS Program already had the collaborative system and referral patterns reasonably well-established in their community prior to implementation of a Center.

Also, the existence of the PACE Program (Parent and Child Education) in some schools helped ease the way for implementation of Centers (Fulton and Caldwell Counties and others have this program.) This program is designed to involve parents who had not completed high school in the education of their children. Through PACE, several schools developed a foundation of teacher and administrator involvement in and support for the broad notion of outreach and working with the health and human service systems in the community.

Despite these earlier programs, collaboration with service agencies has not always been easy to accomplish. One Center Coordinator noted that it "took hard work to convince local CHR people to be more cooperative. Much territoriality had to be overcome, but now the process is working much better."

Another indicator of collaboration and support for the Centers is found in Table 1 - contributions of local agencies and local school districts to Center operations. There are numerous examples of success in this area. For example, Porter FRC has a full-time secretary contributed by their local Community Action Agency. It was mentioned above that the Estes FRC has a nurse and secretary contributed by the Health Department and a local foundation. Breckinridge FRC has a part-time social worker contributed by the School Board. All the Centers have managed to acquire needed in-kind contributions such as clothing and eyeglasses for children, food for families, as well as equipment and furniture for their offices. Some Centers have been aggressive and successful in working with local businesses and churches. Fairdale YSC has gotten help from Community Ministries on energy assistance and a clothes closet. Breckinridge FRC has worked closely with local business associations and churches.

Most principals are very supportive of the program. One principal called it a "dream-come-true" for her school. With so many needs in the community and the school, the Centers are addressing basic human needs that are crucial to learning. This same principal who has been closely involved in the entire reform process believes that the Centers may be the most critical component of KERA (with the possible exception of assessment). Other principals are very positive and supportive of the Centers program.

One superintendent sees the Center as a mechanism to help increase parent involve-

ment in the schools overall and in School Councils. He feels that parents using the Center become more positive and supportive whereas normally they might distrust or fear the school system. Principals in other schools with Centers also see the Centers as an important vehicle to increase parental involvement.

In addition to the Centers and their communities, it is important to assess coordination at the state level. How are CHR, DOE, and other state agencies coordinating their activities? Staff of DOE and CHR agree that relationships are strong and cooperative between the two agencies as well as the various units within these and other state Cabinets. The primary means of coordination is the Interagency Task Force. What are the roles of the Interagency Task Force as a coordinating body and how this group performed? The Task Force developed the five year implementation plan and approves grant applicants. The Task Force also serves as a mechanism to help resolve issues that affect more than one agency of state government. The Task Force and Committees have met regularly since 1990 and it appears that the mission and functions have been performed quite well. With regular meetings and established patterns of communication, this group deals effectively with most issues of cooperation and coordination.

Monitoring and Reporting

As might be expected, Center staff have mixed opinions about reporting requirements recognizing that paperwork is difficult to avoid in a complex program with some political sensitivity and high expectations. Although most Coordinators are positive about state CHR staff and their willingness to help and listen, they still would like some changes in reporting requirements. Some are unsure of the purpose of certain reporting requirements and see the process as "cumbersome."

One individual familiar with the education and human services systems believes that educators are more used to broader, more simple reporting than the detailed, categorized reporting required for CHR programs. If these separate organizational systems have very different cultures and expectations for monitoring and evaluation, the Interagency Task Force and Centers will have to bridge an important gap in overall program evaluation.

Another potential problem in reporting and monitoring is the Household Profile. There are mixed reactions from Coordinators on this instrument. Some see it as no problem; some see it as merely inconvenient; while others see it as too intrusive in some areas. Presumably the intrusiveness is threatening to some potential participants. In addition to the question of what information needs to be collected from participants and why, the issue also relates to when a contact becomes a participant and how such things are counted for evaluation purposes.

The reporting forms used also generate mixed reactions with several Coordinators suggesting the inclusion in the quarterly reports of narratives with anecdotes about activ-

ities and "successes" in order to provide a better or more complete understanding of what Centers are doing for children and families.

Rural-Urban Differences

Are there differences in Center characteristics and behavior in rural or urban areas? The size of a community and the density of the service network(s) are likely to affect Center performance and success. Tables 1 and 2 only begin to suggest the wide variation among Centers in community and school contributions and contacts and clients. Data on referrals to local agencies also are collected in the quarterly reports. These referral patterns are important indicators of the extent to which the Center is involved in collaborative networks of service agencies. How will these and other data be used to measure and compare Center performance, and how will size and rurality affect measures of performance? For example, a smaller population in rural areas does not necessarily indicate that needs for services are less than in more densely populated urban areas. Also, the issue of the extent to which there is "slack" in these service networks is especially critical in rural areas. Are there sufficient service providers and other community resources to meet the new demands from the Centers?

Another issue is whether it would be useful or effective to allow more flexibility in meeting mandated services so that small Centers in rural areas can focus on a few needed areas and do well rather than struggle and expend much energy on areas that might not be a priority and are difficult if not impossible to provide. Since a key component of KERA is local control, some might question whether the stated intention of KERA to develop and support local autonomy contradicts the concept of services mandated by the state. In practice, the mandated service categories are fairly broad; they are obviously important to the concept of a family center; and the state has been flexible in dealing with Center responses to the required services. Practice may make the possible contradiction between local autonomy and mandated services somewhat moot.

Transportation of students and family members is an important but sometimes overlooked service, especially in rural areas. Center staff often transport children and families to services located in other communities. Transportation also is important in some suburban or urban areas. For example, in the Fairdale YSC, thirty percent of their students are bused from the inner-city which poses major problems for service coordination, contacts, home-visits, and the like. The Center is considering an additional site located in the area of the inner-city where most of these students live.

What Doesn't Work?

One Council and Center, although not site visited, was assessed through phone calls and other discussions with observers, and through analysis of the initial grant proposal

and quarterly reports. This case might serve an example of mistakes made in approaching the opportunity and availability of Center money, and also suggests potential problems as more reluctant or less prepared schools are brought into the system.

The Center in question was slow to get started and few services were being offered prior to problems that allegedly occurred between the Principal and the Center Coordinator leading to the resignation of the Coordinator. Although there are several potential explanations for the lack of success, it appears that lack of leadership and weak planning before and after the grant award played a role. The school district apparently took a somewhat centralized approach to the applications process and had only one center accepted out of many applications prepared by the central office.

School staff and community people had not been much involved in proposal development and consequently had not "bought into the idea" and were not well-informed about the concept. In addition, the Principal was relatively new to the school and although not negative about the concept, she had not been involved in the original proposal. The person hired as Center Coordinator had little or no experience in the school system or the local social service network and appeared not to understand the many roles of a Center Coordinator or the mission and functions of a Center. All this ambiguity and confusion occurred in a school district with serious management and leadership problems. The situation has been monitored closely by state staff, and corrective action is being undertaken. This example of problems encountered and the complexity of implementation of the Center concept is reflected in the "lessons" below.

CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS

What are the lessons to be learned from this first-year assessment of Family Resource and Youth Services Centers implemented as part of Kentucky's school reform package?

1. Initiate the implementation process in well-planned stages. Begin with competition for the new Centers limited to only a portion of those schools eligible so that the probability is quite high that the most receptive, knowledgeable, and experienced schools will be first implementers. In other words, begin with schools and communities "ready" for the program. This strategy helps insure that initial enthusiasm and experience can help iron-out inevitable problems and later implementers can benefit from initial successes. More reluctant implementers in later stages of the process can see how Centers work and how they might benefit from the program. This strategy depends on the belief of implementers that the program will continue for some reasonable period of time and early implementers won't be left "holding-the-bag" of a successful program with high expectations but facing the loss of state funds needed to maintain the program.

2. Center resources must be sufficient and flexible. This is a fine line and difficult to specify in practice. Resources must be sufficient to hire basic staff and have a

place to "do business," however too many resources might lead Councils and Centers to ignore the important mandate to work with existing providers or help develop new service programs in the community. Center Coordinators must get out into the community and advocate on behalf of children and families rather than attempt to provide services in the Centers. At the same time, it is recognized that the problems of children and families are virtually limitless, so sufficient resources are needed to meet basic needs. Resources should be flexible enough so that local areas can respond to unique needs and situations, and responsible "entrepreneurial" behavior is not discouraged.

3. Program success depends on structured or constrained decentralization. Local people must have sufficient autonomy and control to solve their own problems and meet identified community needs, but state officials must set limits and monitor Council and Center activities to guard against abuse or deviations from the basic concept and guiding principals.

4. If Center services are to be mandated from the "top," the service categories should be broad and relate directly to the well-being of children and families with minimal details about how the services are to be delivered. A long, detailed laundry list of mandated services will likely lead to excessive conflict and gaming behavior with subsequent delay, resistance, and possible implementation failure.

5. Center staff, especially the Center Coordinator, should be experienced either in the school system or the community social and health service network. The Center Coordinator must be able to understand and deal effectively with children, especially those with problems, as well as parents of those children, community leaders, teachers and principals, and service agency heads. A key to early success in implementation of Centers is commitment and enthusiasm of the Center Coordinator and other staff. Also, creativity and entrepreneurial skills are useful qualities. These sound like difficult if not impossible personnel requirements, but the Centers assessed for this report have staff with most if not all these desirable qualities.

6. Center staff must establish close working relationships with teaching staff, including school and district administrators. In successful Centers, Coordinators work with educational staff by being available during lunch periods and other times in teacher lounges, conducting one-on-one consultations, and by attending staff meetings and planning days and training sessions. A pattern of trust and teamwork must be established and maintained between school staff and Center staff. Effective communication patterns must be established and nurtured.

7. To be successful, Centers need support, cooperation, and leadership from the top officials in the school, the district, and the community. It is difficult to overestimate the importance of experience, commitment, and enthusiasm among all involved to make the Centers work. Can a good idea like the Center concept succeed in

a bad environment; that is, in a community without much experience or history of agency cooperation and collaboration or in a school with an "autocratic" culture or history of centralized control? It is not likely. Without very effective political and organizational skills and much effort by a Center Coordinator, as well as support and protection from a strong Advisory Council, it would be difficult to change attitudes and perceptions built up over many years in a school or school district. As with education reform in general, some superintendents, principals, and teachers will view Centers as a potential complication or even as a threat to the existing order.

8. Effective evaluation processes should be an integral component of the management and operations of Centers. It is important for the state to work with Council and Center staff to collect sufficient useful data to help evaluate Center performance. In this period of fiscal limits and some public suspicion of government programs, especially "public welfare," it is important that schools and Centers and state officials be able to justify their activities and services and document results of the investment of public funds. All this should be done in a spirit of cooperation with respect for reasonable mandates from the providers of funding and program support.

Some will say these lessons all sound obvious, simplistic, or even trite, but it is important to note how often many of them are ignored or forgotten in designing health, education, and human service programs, especially when the designers are at the "top" of a system and implementers are "below" them. These may be simple lessons, but they are not always easy to accomplish. In the case of Family Resource and Youth Services Centers as part of KERA, Kentucky has learned most of these lessons well.

Although initial implementation of the Centers policy has been relatively successful and problem-free, what about the future? What are some issues that might affect continued success of the program? One important issue involves financial resources. The issue of resource sufficiency and the future of Centers can be reduced to certain numbers and questions. If there are approximately 1000 schools that meet the criterion of 20 percent of students eligible for free lunches and each has a Center averaging $70,000 per year of funding from KERA, then the program will cost a minimum of $70 million per year. If fewer schools have Centers or schools combine Centers or if the state allocation averages less than $70,000 per year, then yearly costs could be reduced. For example, funding only 500 Centers with the same average allocation would cost $35 million/year. Forecasting program costs is difficult, however full implementation of the Center concept could cost $50 million per year and perhaps more.

Are these numbers that state policy-makers could support, especially as Kentucky faces a very uncertain fiscal future? Would advocates and beneficiaries of the Center concept be able to demonstrate benefits sufficient to make the allocation of such future

budgetary resources appear to be a good investment? These are questions that policymakers, educators, the Interagency Task Force, and others will have to face in the very near future - certainly beginning in the next biennial budget process. Budgetary realities lead to issues of program advocacy.

The question of organizational "ownership" of the Center program (who is the primary advocate for the program - the Commissioner of Education or the Secretary of the CHR or someone else such as a powerful legislator?), and the budgetary numbers suggest two broad options for the future of the program. First, it could be decided that the program is a "pilot" and will not be implemented fully over the next 2-3 years. Assuming the pilot program is given sufficient time to demonstrate effectiveness, would school districts be willing to assume ownership of the program and continue or initiate Councils and Centers using local dollars? If districts see the value of the Centers, and if school based decision-making is working, and if the stated emphasis on local initiative and control is real and continues, then the program would stand or fall on its merits at the district level.

Another alternative is that the CHR could keep the Centers under its organizational "protection." The Centers would continue to be located in the schools, but be funded by the Cabinet with Center Coordinators acting as the local service managers for CHR. However, it may be that CHR is not organized in such a way as to maximize service delivery to families and children. Rather than separate Departments of Social Insurance, Health, Employment Services, or Medicaid Services, the Cabinet might be organized around certain client groups such as the elderly or children and families. If all health and social programs for children and families were located in the same department within the Cabinet (a Department of Children and Families within a reorganized Cabinet?), local providers as well as staff in Centers within schools might be better able to coordinate the complex mix of services needed by children and their families. This is a difficult and controversial organizational question and relates to political and fiscal issues including federal requirements as well as requirements of other funding sources.

The issue of budget sufficiency and full implementation relates to need and demand for Council and Center services and programs. Despite the initial enthusiasm and relative success of early adopters, what will occur when less interested and less positive school systems are brought into the program, when more demands for services are placed on existing providers, when more difficult and complex social and health problems must be addressed, and when more independent, territorial and complex social service systems must be accessed by the Councils and Centers?

How long and to what degree can Councils and Centers depend on some providers giving "free care?" Needs for services are likely to grow, but state resources may not. As more Centers come on-line, will existing provider networks be willing and able to provide increased services and levels of care? If service providers do not have sufficient resources to

meet the increased demands, would the General Assembly or the CHR allocate additional resources to health and human services for children and families?

The answers to these questions depend on how successful the Interagency Task Force and local Advisory Councils and Centers are in building and sustaining cooperative relationships among providers in their communities, and in developing an effective, statewide advocacy coalition. The intensity and political clout of competing claimants for limited state resources, as well as the strength of the future state economy also might constrain the future of the program.

ENDNOTES

1. The even more difficult and complex question of whether Center programs as one component of the educational reform package help to improve student academic performance is discussed in more detail in an accompanying report available from the Prichard Committee. The report is titled "Family Centers in Kentucky Schools: Politics and Policy in Education and Welfare Service Delivery."

2. The policy theory also is based on the many changes occurring in family structures in America and Kentucky. These include increased rates of divorce and single-parent families (female-headed), increases in mothers working outside the home, and increases in children born outside of marriage (often to teenagers). These and other demographic changes relate to increased numbers of children living in poverty and various social problems such as crime, substance abuse, and the like.

Another important assumption in the policy theory is that present systems for delivering health and human services to children and families in this nation are inadequate. The theory assumes innovation and collaboration between these complex systems are needed to serve children and families more effectively. These and other components of the policy theory are analyzed in more detail in the report titled "Family Centers in Kentucky Schools: Politics and Policy in Education and Welfare Service Delivery."

3. There are two broad approaches to analyzing organizations (Centers or schools) and evaluating the impacts of programs. A quantitative, comparative approach develops large-scale data-sets measuring things such as funding and budgets, class size, teacher salaries, client or student characteristics and other organizational "inputs" and "outputs." These data are usually analyzed using statistical techniques such as regression or factor analysis. Although these approaches sometimes gather data over time, usually the data are a "snapshot" of many units or subjects at one point in time. Tracking many subjects (individuals or organizations) and collecting extensive and useful data over time are difficult and costly undertakings. Much previous research also suggests that the quantitative approach often focuses on behaviors that are more easily measured (and collected) such as number of clients or number of staff, number of visits, and the like. Outcomes of educational or therapeutic interventions are complex and difficult to conceptualize and measure.

A case study approach uses direct observation and interviews (usually by an individual researcher) to gather qualitative data on a small number of subjects or units of analysis, often over time. Rather than emphasizing the counting and measuring of certain characteristics using standardized instruments, the focus is on understanding and evaluating individual and group behavior internal and external to the organization. Whereas the quantitative approach is concerned with generalizability based on a type of social science rigor, the case-study approach presumably sacrifices some generalizability to acquire more

in-depth knowledge and details about difficult to measure and quantify concepts such as leadership, morale, organization culture, commitment, family well-being, and the like for a small number of units.

Many Center staff recognize these distinctions and complexities. They understand and accept the need to complete forms and document activities through counting clients or contacts, and developing written cooperative agreements, but they also understand and experience on a daily basis the complexity of "helping" a child or a family and somehow measuring or accounting for the results of certain interventions. For some practitioners, the perceived need to generate numbers to justify the investment of public funds does not appear to diminish concern for the well-being of clients.

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